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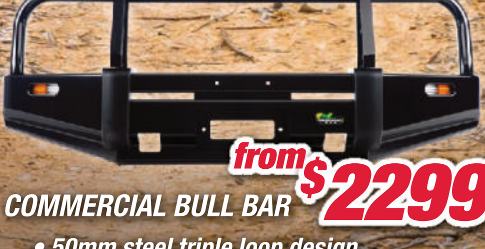

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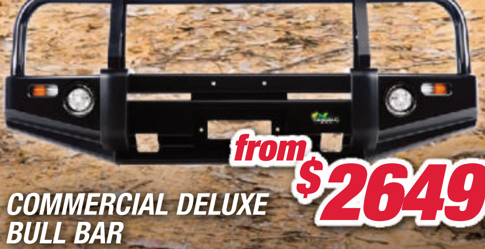

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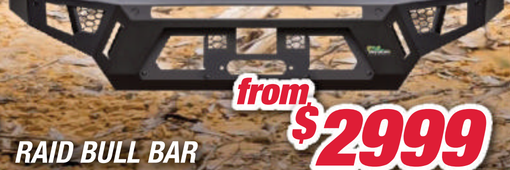

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FROM THE EDITOR

WINTER IS COMING

YEAH, YEAH, SUMMER WAS A BIT RUBBISH

Talk about a game of two halves – while the north was punished by storms and cyclones in late January and February, the south was largely unscathed.

So many people were hit so hard by the cyclone and especially in the north even we who escaped floods and falling trees are left wondering why summer largely sidestepped us. Down south, people are sunburned as brown as roasted peanuts and crying out for rain. Well, except on the West Coast perhaps.

Puzzling.

On the upside, settled weather in April and May offers the chance to get out and visit the backblocks of real New Zealand.

We are still waiting to see the lasting effect of the government's clean car programme, with several aspects being wound back by new Prime Minister Chris Hipkins and nobody yet keen to launch a right-hand drive electric ute.

Could it be that's because utes (diesel, double cab, four-wheel drive) actually work for a living?

Personally, I'm still remembering a previous PM who told us utes were being used inappropriately and electric utes were coming to market in 2022. Still waiting.

I suspect there would be a bunch of people in Coromandel, Gisborne and Hawke's Bay who would disagree.

The utes and 4WDs that worked so hard to help so many people during Gabrielle were driven by real Kiwis and helped real Kiwis. A lot of that was about communities, about people helping people, because that's what we do. Our behaviour in extreme situations defines us, and we don't need to be told who we are.

Onya New Zealand, we did the hard yards over summer. Now it's time to get out there and enjoy our country.

Mark Baker
Editor, *NZ4WD*

Front cover images: the Windwhistle high country tour, and Ford's new Ranger Sport V6

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Concept reveals coming Triton

Raptor competitor? Maybe. EV version? Likely

Mitsubishi's generation six Triton is looming closer.

The company's XRT Concept for the Bangkok International Motor Show strongly previews the coming next-generation Triton which will be released globally before March 2024.

Mitsubishi says the new Triton – like its outgoing version – will be a vehicle of global strategic importance and is likely to be exported to around 150 countries around the world.

The sixth-generation Triton will introduce the first full redesign for the mid-size utility in more than nine years, characterised by a "fierce expression on the front" and a "robust" bonnet that contributes to the model's "horizontally-themed styling".

Hinting that Mitsubishi will move its Triton into Ranger Raptor territory are the aggressive front and rear wheel arch mouldings and mud-terrain tyres

Mitsubishi says the camouflage design of the XRT Concept is inspired by volcanic rock and is "packed with condensed energy". The vehicle's side graphics hark to the brand's Ralliart motorsport heritage.

A prototype of the model will take part in the Asia Cross Country Rally later this year with former Dakar Rally champion (2002 and 2003) Hiroshi Masuoka as team director. Mitsubishi won numerous desert race titles with versions of its Pajero.

Mitsubishi says its engineers will accompany the team to provide support and perform pre-testing on the model ahead of its global launch, and that the participation in such events is critical to ensuring the production vehicle is safe, comfortable and enjoyable in any weather or road conditions.

"Fiscal (year) 2023 is an important year for Mitsubishi Motors to accelerate our business in the ASEAN region, with the launch of a fully revamped Triton," said Mitsubishi Motors president and chief executive officer Takao Kato.

"The Triton is going through final preparation for its release, as we have performed rigorous endurance tests around the world while also incorporating the know-how gained from our off-road rally activities."

Mitsubishi is yet to confirm powertrain offerings for the forthcoming model, the current turbo-diesel 'four' offered locally has long been rumoured to be eventually replaced by a plug-in hybrid unit, a further development of that powering the current Outlander.

Development of an EV powertrain for Triton and Pajero Sport is already in its "advanced engineering" stage. That suggests the company's first electrically augmented ute could hit showrooms by as early as 2025.

Mitsubishi says it is still evaluating hybrid, plug-in hybrid and pure electric options.

The dual cab looks somewhat similar to the Nissan Navara. That's because the two nameplates are sharing the same ladder-frame chassis thanks to Mitsubishi's partnership with Renault and Nissan.

Mitsubishi says the next-generation Triton will launch in Thailand later this year and will later be sequentially launched across South East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and other global markets.

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Chery's back, and travelling on

Petrol power and a PHEV version

Chinese auto brand Chery is behind a new 4WD SUV.

Cherry had a brief presence in New Zealand, mainly selling wee econobox cars. Though no firm plans have currently been announced for New Zealand, Chery's spin-off brand Jetour has shown official images of its new Traveller SUV, formerly known as the T-1, ahead of its expected global launch this month.

The Traveller signals the brand's intention to expand into the off-road space dominated by Toyota, Land Rover and Jeep.

The images of the Traveller show it has a boxy silhouette reminiscent of the GWM Tank 300, which recently went on sale in Australia. It also bears a passing resemblance to the Land Rover Defender.

The Jetour brand is carried on the grille, while the LED headlights are made up of six separate units.

Along the sides are flared, squared-off wheel arches, and roof rails that have hand-grips on them.

The back of the Traveller is upright with a square spare tyre housing mounted on the side-opening tailgate.

Jetour has confirmed the Traveller will be available as a five- and seven-seater, measuring 4.8 metres and 5.0 metres, respectively.

According to Chinese reports, the Traveller will be available with petrol and plug-in hybrid (PHEV) powertrains.

There will be a 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol engine with a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission, a 2.0-litre turbocharged petrol engine with an eight-speed automatic transmission, as well as a plug-in hybrid powertrain consisting of a 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol engine and an electric motor.

All versions of the Jetour Traveller will have a mechanical four-wheel drive system with a differential lock.

On the inside of the Traveller is an unusual octagonal steering wheel and outer air vents, a large touchscreen infotainment system, a digital instrument cluster, and a driver monitoring system on the A-pillar.

There's also a hefty gear selector, what appears to be an off-road mode selector dial, and the seats are leather and suede.

Serious protection

Armoured Defender ready for duty

German automotive armouring specialist Trasco Bremen has launched the A-Kip level Land Rover Defender 110 SUV.

Even before the new Land Rover Defender was introduced, it was obvious the next-gen model would receive plenty of attention from coachbuilders and secure vehicle companies, given the model's traditional use by international organisations and embassies and high wealth customers.

The classic Defender, despite being used by many military forces throughout the world, was never easy or inexpensive to armour discretely given the relatively thin pillars, upright windshield, and the geometry of the roof, despite many armoured versions having been developed for military use. Classic Defenders converted by armouring specialists for military duty, therefore, were neither subtle nor particularly appealing for on-road use by private owners, even if they were able to shrug off assault rifle rounds.

The new Defender model promised to blend the luxury of modern Land Rovers with the off-road abilities of their predecessors, all while offering plenty of interior space and everyday usability – the perfect set of qualities for most armored vehicle customers.

A few months ago Trasco Bremen, one of the oldest and most trusted names in the business, has rolled out a special armour package for the Defender 110 developed to the anti-kidnapping VPAM4 and VPAM6 standards, aimed at traditional private buyers of armoured SUVs. This standard combines a medium level of ballistic protection with nearly unnoticeable installation—ideal for higher-risk countries, but less ideal for active war zones.

The VPAM 4 and 6 level armour package includes ballistic glass all around.

Trasco Bremen's A-Kip (anti-kidnapping level of protection) uses lightweight materials to preserve the Defender 110's handling and performance characteristics. This starts with ballistic glass all around, certified to the VPAM 4 or VPAM 6 grades, including composite or steel panels for the model's Alpine windows. The rear cargo section, as is customary in the industry for SUVs, stays stock, with Trasco adding a wall immediately behind the vehicle's rear seats.

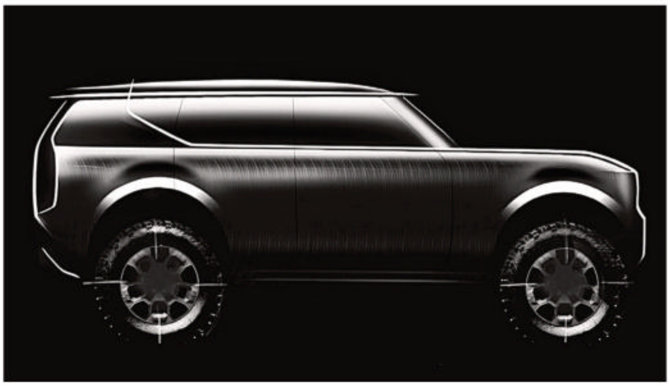
Scouting the road ahead

South Carolina factory plans

Volkswagen will build electric vehicles for its upcoming Scout Motors brand in South Carolina, USA.

The EV plant will be VW's second vehicle production facility in the U.S., but it won't make anything but Scout models.

A new assembly plant for Scout vehicles will be built in Blythewood, South Carolina, at a cost of $2 billion. The plant is expected to begin producing an electric pickup truck and "rugged" SUVs with the Scout name in 2026. The new Scout EV plant will create an estimated 4000 jobs and be able to make over 200,000 vehicles a year when fully operational. These will all be Scout vehicles, not EVs for other VW brands, a VW spokesperson told Automotive News.



VW currently operates one factory in the US., in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The company announced last May that it will spend over $7 billion in North America over five years to "boost its product portfolio, regional R&D, and manufacturing capabilities" in the region. Volkswagen started building the ID.4 in Chattanooga in July 2022, with plans to produce 7000 EVs a month. This number should increase throughout 2023. The automaker also started up a battery engineering laboratory in Chattanooga last year and has said it intends to "build up" battery cell production in the US.

VW took control of the Scout brand in 2021 when it acquired Navistar (which was the successor to International Harvester, which created the original Scout) and officially revived the brand in 2022. Scout Motors CEO Scott Keogh, formerly CEO and president of Volkswagen Group of America, said what started in 1960 is coming full circle.

"Scout is once again reimagining the adventures that an off-road vehicle can deliver – only this time, it's with an all-electric platform. Today, we are closer than ever to putting an important American icon back on the road."

The $2 billion plant will create an estimated 4000 jobs and will be able to produce 200,000 EVs a year.

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E-fuel draws closer

Wind will power fuel plant

Still unconvinced by the EV evangelism, or despairing at the lack of a 4WD ute EV?

It's experimental right now, but Porsche will soon be selling an environmentally responsible fuel for cars.

Synthetic e-fuels made from water in a factory powered by windmills sounds like a carbon-neutral green fantasy, but with Porsche behind the plan, expect the Chile-based plant to be producing millions of gallons of e-fuel by the end of the decade.

Porsche says carbon-free driving with an internal-combustion engine is possible, but takes work. The company has been investigating synthetic eFuels for years and started trial production at the new plant in February.

Chile is an ideal location for this facility because it has plenty of renewable energy sources, Porsche said, and the end product can easily be shipped from there around the world. Power for the plant is created by a dedicated wind farm.

Porsche hopes to be selling 145 million gallons of this new eFuel per year before the end of the decade.

The automaker announced that its pilot plant in Punta Arenas, Chile, has successfully produced its first litres of eFuel, Porsche's name for its synthetic fuel, which is made from water and carbon dioxide using renewable energy.

Porsche has been working with partners on new liquid fuels for many years, as a supplement to the work on electric vehicles that the VW Group as a whole has been highlighting. Porsche sees eFuels as a green supplement to EVs on what it calls its "double-e path" that encompasses both e-mobility and eFuels. Porsche calls eFuel a practical alternative that allows internal-combustion-engine vehicles to operate in a "nearly CO2-neutral".

The eFuel will first be shipped from Chile to what the automaker calls its "lighthouse projects," like the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup. The eFuel will also be used in vehicles at Porsche Experience Centers around the world, allowing fans to burn biomass instead of fossil fuels on the track. Once the pilot phase ends, the Punta Arenas plant will be able to produce a projected 14.5 million gallons each year by the middle of the decade, Porsche said, before hitting the 145-million-gallon target two years later.

Using renewable energy to produce a liquid fuel has a bigger impact on reducing overall CO2 emissions than any fossil fuels that might be used to transport it to end users, according to Porsche board member Barbara Frenkel. Frenkel also spoke at the briefing and said that it makes sense to use green energy where it's found, whenever possible.

Porsche says it has invested over $100 million in eFuel development and production. BMW is backing a similar fuel project now being built in Tasmania.

Meanwhile, European nations are pushing back against proposals to ban manufacture of vehicles with internal combustion engines.

The European Union (EU) has drafted a plan which will allow carmakers to sell new internal combustion engine (ICE) cars in Europe after 2035 if they are powered by carbon-neutral synthetic fuels.

News agency Reuters uncovered the proposal earlier this week which came about thanks to multiple EU member states refusing to sign the piece of legislation that states carmakers need to reduce tailpipe emissions by 100 per cent by 2025, effectively banning the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles.

In the draft document, the EU suggests creating a new type of vehicle category for ICE vehicles powered by carbon-neutral fuels. The document also mentions that the vehicles won't be allowed to run on any other fuel.

The push for synthetic fuels has come from opposing nations such as Germany and Italy.

Vitara hybrid arrives

Fuel economy and emissions improved

New hybrid versions of the Suzuki Vitara Turbo will improve fuel economy and reduce emissions.

Of three hybrids launched, the one that is of interest to 4WD fans is the range-topping Allgrip all-wheel drive.

In official combined fuel tests, the Vitara Hybrid Turbo is at least 15 per cent more economical than a comparable non-Hybrid Vitara while also delivering up to 18 percent lower CO2 emissions.

Suzuki says its hybrid system is simple, light eight, compact and affordable.

Similar to the hybrid system in the Suzuki Swift, SHVS – the abbreviation for Smart Hybrid Vehicle by Suzuki - comprises an integrated starter generator (ISG), engine control module (ECM), auxiliary power module that incorporates a lithium-ion battery and sensors and a DC/DC (48 volt to 12 volt) power converter, all factory warranted for five years.

Powering the new hybrid is a new K14D version of the 1.3 litre four valve per cylinder Boosterjet direct injection engine. It produces 95kW at 5,500 rpm and maximum torque of 235Nm between 2,000 and 3,000 rpm.

A newly designed turbocharger has been specified to give better efficiency and faster spool-up response. Improved injectors result in better air/fuel mixture and fuel delivery is upgraded with maximum fuel pressure increasing to 350 bar.

Automatic stop/starting when the vehicle is at a standstill saves fuel while the lithium-ion battery powers all electrics. A torque assist function instantly adds torque from the electric motor to the engine from rest. Added torque from the electric motor smooths acceleration by adding torque from the electric motor until the turbocharger kicks in.

The hybrid's Integrated Starter Generator (ISG) assists the engine on take-off and acceleration, reducing fuel consumption and lowering emissions. While cruising, ISG helps power the additional electrical components and systems like climate control air conditioning, safety features and smartphone connectivity.

ISG uses braking energy to efficiently recharge the Vitara Hybrid's battery.

The hybrid Turbo accelerates from a standstill to 100 km/h in 9.5 seconds.

The Allgrip AWD Hybrid auto returns 6.0 litres/100 km (6.9 litres/100 km for the equivalent non-hybrid model).

The hybrid emits 136 g/km (161 g/km for the non-hybrid Allgrip), a 15.5 percent drop.

Standard equipment includes hill hold control, reversing camera, satellite navigation, Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and hands-free calling. An engine performance monitor in the centre of the instrument panel displays real time information with hybrid battery status, running performance, fuel economy and a digital clock.

Recommended retail prices for the 1.4T Hybrid JLX AWD auto is $44,990. Optional two-tone body colours are an additional $800 on each model.

The Government Clean Car Tax Rebate for the JLX ALLGRIP auto is $1,614.

4WD for play and competition

2024 Polaris RZR XP 1000

Polaris can justifiably claim to have introduced "side-by-side" or UTV vehicles to New Zealand off-road racing and spawned the UTV off-road touring craze.

The Polaris RZR XP gets more power, a stronger frame and a more comfortable ride for the 2024 model year which actually kicks off mid-2023.

Polaris says its recreational customers want all-day comfort and solid performance with reliability.

The frame is 25 percent stronger than before. That helps boost agility to give drivers more performance. It also helps increase comfort by cutting down on buzzes, rattles, and squeaks.

The new bodywork gives the RZR XP a fresher and more aggressive look and helps increase comfort and serviceability.

Polaris worked to make the cabin itself better. The seats are an inch lower. The rear seats still sit higher than the fronts.

The team has made upgrades to seat adjustment controls, and steering tilt.

The new engine remains a 1000cc unit: the 114 horsepower Gen2 ProStar twin. Polaris says it is more responsive thanks to the extra power. It can also go twice as long between oil changes thanks to the new design and more oil capacity.

Along with the extra power comes a new CVT. The updated gearbox gets lower ratios for improved low-speed torque and control. It has better airflow to help keep it cooler and extend belt life, and there is a geared reverse for strength when reversing.

The RZR XP retains Polaris's selectable AWD system, allowing drivers to run in 2WD for manoeuvrability and quickly switch to AWD for sticky situations. Polaris has upgraded the driveline with stronger prop and half-shafts, beefier bearings, and other components to boost reliability.

RZR XP's suspension features 16-position adjustable Walker Evans Needle Shocks front and rear. They're re-tuned this year to offer a more comfortable ride. The shocks offer 52cm (20.5 inches) of usable travel, and the XP has 36.3 cm (14.5 inches) of ground clearance.

Polaris said the choice was made to go with Walker Evans because of the segment's buyers. The company said its customers value dynamics but are price-conscious and aren't looking for fancier or big-buck electronic dampers.

There's also a Pro R UTV, new for 2023, which is factory-built for the booming global off-road motorsport market. Built with a high-strength, lightweight chassis compliant with FIA T4 Class, SCORE, Best in the Desert and Rally Raid race series, the RZR Pro R Factory is ready for any global race event. To withstand the toughest and most extreme terrain, the purpose-built machine features 35" BFGoodrich tires on Method Race Wheels with exclusive Bead Grip technology. A full skid plate, front and rear Baja bumper, and cage offer complete vehicle protection so critical components such as the engine and driveline stay protected. In addition, integrated mounts for spare tires, jack and tool kits allow the factory racers to confidently tackle each racecourse, knowing they can get out of tricky situations when needed.

In New Zealand, UTV racing was kicked off by Polaris, whose 800cc and 900cc racers brought massive grids to race events, helping revitalise the sport.

Terrain Tamer in Chile

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REPUESTOS 4X4

Don Kyatt Spare Parts has opened its eighth international and 18th overall branch, a new facility in Chile this month.

It's a far cry from the modest premises in Moorabbin, in Melbourne's South East, that acted as the company's home when they first started trading in November 1969, but the Don Kyatt Group has gone from strength to strength since then, opening branches Australia-wide to service every corner of the country, and expanding internationally to take the Terrain Tamer and Flashlube brands into key markets such as Europe, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and most recently, Africa.

The next step for the expansion of the company is the new Chilean branch, operating from the capital city of Santiago.

The new branch will act as a launching pad for the South American and Central American areas, which have previously proven to be strong markets for the export of the Terrain Tamer brand, especially in the extensive mining sector which includes large Australian companies such as BHP.

With stock already available and operations under way as of the 1 April, the branch will be managed by Nicolas Bonilla, a former assistant manager of the company's European operation in France, and perhaps most helpfully, a native Spanish speaker, who has migrated specifically to take on the task of finding, setting up and running the new location.

Additionally, South American consumption of LPG is among the highest in the world, making it a key market for the export of the Don Kyatt Group's additives and lubricants brand, Flashlube, and in particular, the original Valve Saver Fluid and kit products.

"Our brand's beginnings are rooted in outback Australia and the extreme conditions that the terrain offers, and Chile has very similar environments, so it makes sense as a base for our operations in South America," says general manager Brent Hutchinson.

"We have been shipping to the region for 30 years, but it has been a slow process until now, so to have local stock holdings and to be able to service and grow our existing customer base more effectively changes the game for us."

Fuel figures challenged

Real-world economy test by Consumer NZ

One of the key selling-points of the new wave of hybrids and plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEVs) has been their excellent fuel efficiency. If buyers weren't all a-fizz about reducing their carbon footprint, they were encouraged by the saving in fuel economy.

The PHEV use an average of 73 per cent more fuel during "real-life" driving than the manufacturers' claims, according to testing by Consumer NZ.

The watchdog says standard hybrids averaged 20 per cent more fuel use after its trial of 10 vehicles revealed both engine types run up "larger-than-expected fuel bills".

Consumer NZ was commissioned by the Ministry of Transport to conduct the trial and assess the fuel use of five marques' PHEVs and hybrids.

The hybrid models involved were Toyota's Yaris ZR, RAV4 and Highlander, a Kia Niro and a Hyundai Ioniq, while the PHEVs put to the test were a RAV4, Niro and Ioniq, along with a Ford Escape ST-Line X and MG HS Plus.

James le Page, Consumer NZ test content team leader, says manufacturers' fuel efficiency figures come from laboratory tests conducted under controlled settings. "However, when you drive a vehicle on 'real roads' the efficiency is likely to be lower. The fuel usage was much higher than manufacturers claimed."

He says the difference in fuel efficiency was also evident in each car's computer, which showed PHEVs used on average 45 per cent more fuel and hybrids 10 per cent more than manufacturers' claims.

Consumer NZ states its findings echo those of Transport & Environment, a European clean transport campaign group that after a survey in 2020 found emissions and fuel use were, on average, over two and a half times those of official test values.

Meanwhile, the Commerce Commission has been looking at fossil fuel prices, finding strong price variation between and within cities

The Commission's second Quarterly Fuel Monitoring Report shows significant variations in fuel prices between our major cities, but also within the cities themselves. While Wellington had the highest overall prices, Auckland had the largest price variation between its most expensive and least expensive site. Prices varied by 22 cents per litre for Regular 91, 29 cents for Premium 95 and 98, and 31 cents for Diesel.

Commission Chair John Small says this demonstrates consumers could benefit from shopping around – "there may be a 20-30 cent difference in what you pay at one station compared with another down the road, and that's a discount worth having – it all adds up."

ALL-TERRAIN SHOEBOX

Land Rover's 101 a military workhorse

It's a Landie, but not as we know it.

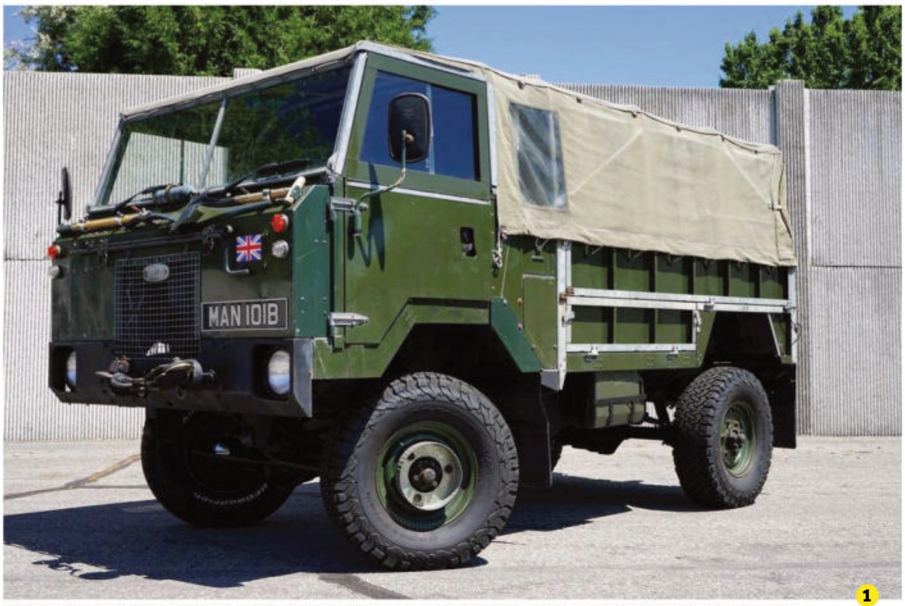
The Land Rover 101 was built to a British Army specification for a 'gun carrier'. In private or commercial use, they were a mainstay of shuttle buses at New Zealand ski fields.

Occasionally, a 101 Forward Control Land Rover pops up on auction sites like TradeMe, though they do tend to sells mainly by word of mouth among Landie enthusiasts.

The 101, or the 'one tonne' (after its supposed payload), was designed as a gun carrier for the British army in the late 1960s, produced in the 1970s and decommissioned by the 1990s. They were never sold new to the public, but they've made their way into private hands since.

Most of them seem to still keep their original Rover 3.5-litre V8s; and while they're pretty agricultural to drive, there's a small but keen ownership scene to help keep them on the road. As always, Google opens that door.

Originals were canvas roofed but later came with ambulance or radio truck bodies, too, and there's a real diverse mix of them around today. They make great overland campervans, for those who can tolerate the driving experience.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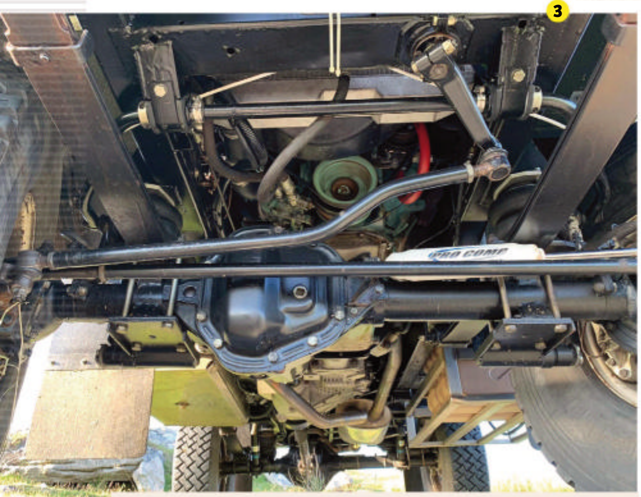
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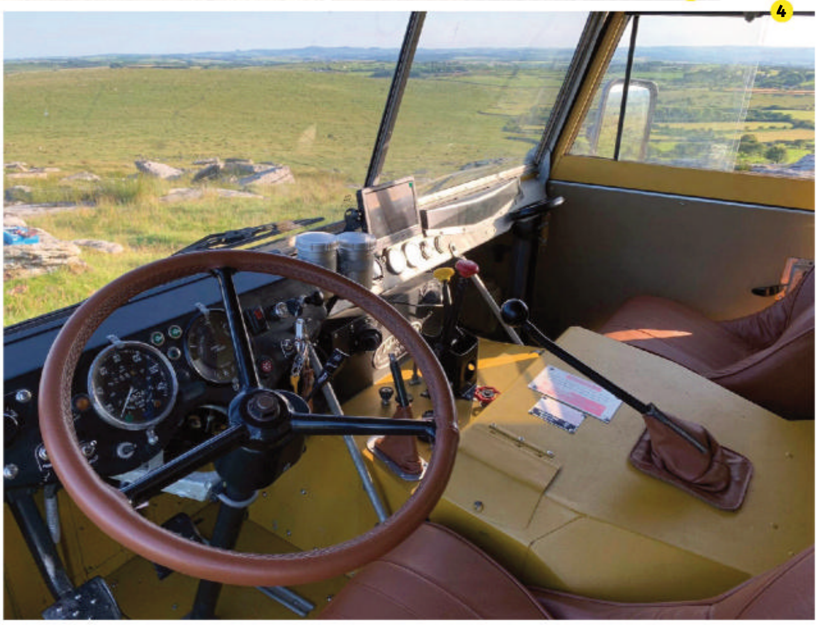
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1: Fully restored in Army colours.
2: They do tip over a bit.
3: Land Rover mechanicals and leaf springs.
4: Utilitarian cab, great forward vision.

EV now, hydrogen soon?

BMW leads the way with fuel cell hydrogen X5

In the UK, studies show fuelling an EV is now more expensive than fuelling a petrol or diesel vehicle.

In the US, the value of pre-owned Tesla EVs is falling.

Here in New Zealand, taxpayers are subsidising the Government's semi-generous subsidy to get people into EVs.

The only semi-off-road EVs or hybrids available here are SUVs, and many of them are very, very urban.

Still keen on alternative fuels? An EV may not be the best bet in the medium to long term. Off-roading on alternative fuels? Hydrogen may be the fuel of choice.

The BMW Group has launched the first vehicles in a pilot hydrogen fleet. Its's two decades since the company showed its original Clean Energy hydrogen vehicles, a demonstration fleet of 7 Series cars that used hydrogen in internal combustion engines with zero emissions.

After four years of development work, the BMW iX5 Hydrogen vehicle and development project is entering its critical next phase.

A fleet of almost 100 vehicles will be sent out internationally for demonstration and trial purposes for various target groups. This active driving experience will be the first chance for people not involved in the development process to gain a direct impression of what the BMW iX5 Hydrogen has to offer.

"Hydrogen is a versatile energy source that has a key role to play in the energy transition process and therefore in climate protection. After all, it is one of the most efficient ways of storing and transporting renewable energies," said Oliver Zipse, Chairman of the Board of Management of BMW AG.

"We should use this potential to also accelerate the transformation of the mobility sector. Hydrogen is the missing piece in the jigsaw when it comes to emission-free mobility. One technology on its own will not be enough to enable climate-neutral mobility worldwide."

The BMW iX5 Hydrogen developed from the current BMW X5 was first unveiled as a concept in 2019.

Its hydrogen fuel cell system is produced at the company's in-house competence centre for hydrogen in Munich. This technology is one of the core elements in the BMW iX5 Hydrogen and generates a continuous output of 125 kW/170 hp.

A chemical reaction takes place in the fuel cell between gaseous hydrogen from the tanks and oxygen from the air.

The BMW Group sources the individual fuel cells from the Toyota Motor Corporation. The two companies have enjoyed a partnership characterised by trust for many years and have been collaborating on fuel cell drive systems since 2013.

Fuel cell systems are manufactured in two main steps, based on the individual fuel cells. The cells are first assembled into a fuel cell stack. The next step involves fitting all the other components to produce a complete fuel cell system. Stacking of the fuel cells is largely a fully automated process. Once the individual components have been inspected for any damage, the stack is compressed by machine with a force of five tonnes and placed in a housing. The stack housing is manufactured in the light metal foundry at BMW Group Plant Landshut using a sand-casting technique.

For this, molten aluminium is poured into a mould made from compacted sand mixed with resin in a process specially designed for this small-series vehicle.

The pressure plate, which delivers hydrogen and oxygen to the fuel cell stack, is made from cast plastic parts and light-alloy castings, also from the Landshut plant. The pressure plate forms a gas-tight and water-tight seal around the stack housing.

In combination with a highly integrated drive unit using fifth-generation BMW eDrive technology the powertrain delivers up to 295kW/401bhp.

In coasting overrun and braking phases, the motor also serves as a generator, feeding energy back into a power battery.

The BMW iX5 Hydrogen is being built in the BMW Group's pilot plant at its Research and Innovation Centre (FIZ) in Munich. The hydrogen needed to supply the fuel cell is stored in two 700-bar tanks made of carbon-fibre reinforced plastic (CFRP).

Together these hold almost six kilograms of hydrogen, enough to give the BMW iX5 Hydrogen a range of 504km (313 miles) in the WLTP cycle. Filling up the hydrogen tanks only takes three to four minutes, eliminating the long waits endured by EV owners when refuelling.

The BMW Group is the first German carmaker to have joined the "Business Ambition for 1.5°C campaign" led by the Science Based Targets initiative and is committed to achieving the goal of full climate neutrality throughout the value chain.

The next step in this process involves the BMW Group's plan to reduce CO2 emissions per vehicle over its full lifecycle – i.e. supply chain, production and use phase – by at least 40 per cent by 2030 compared with 2019.

The BMW Group sold more than 215,000 fully electric vehicles worldwide in 2022, which represents an increase over the previous year of almost 108 per cent. Fully electric vehicles accounted for just under nine per cent of total sales volumes last year, and this share is set to increase to 15 per cent in 2023.

By 2030 at the latest, the BMW Group is looking to reach a situation where fully electric vehicles claim a more than 50 per cent share of its overall sales.

The BMW Group views FCEV technology as an addition to the drive technology used by battery-electric vehicles.

According to a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA), hydrogen offers considerable potential as a future energy source in connection with global energy transition activities. Thanks to its storage and transport capabilities, hydrogen can be used for a wide variety of applications.

Most industrialised countries are adopting hydrogen strategies and backing them up with roadmaps and concrete projects. In the transport sector, hydrogen can become a further technology option, alongside battery-electric mobility, for shaping sustainable individual mobility in the long term.

Hydrogen fuel for heavy road transport is currently being trialled in New Zealand, using gas produced on the North Island's west coast.

With the right conditions, hydrogen fuel cell technology has the potential to become a further pillar in the BMW Group's drive train portfolio for local CO2-free mobility.

From flat tyres to bush beast

New life for a rare old Jeep

Letter from America: this 1967 Kaiser Jeep M715 looked destined for the wrecker's yard. It hadn't moved in half a decade, all its tires were flat, and it needed a new engine.

The body of the truck wore years of filth but the frame was in good condition.

The aim of the rebuild was a restored truck that could get into the woods, comport itself on the highway, and carry just enough camping gear to make any patch of dirt feel like home. But first, it needed an engine. The original showed 19,000 hard miles and had long since given up, prompting some brainstorming.

So, the ubiquitous AMC 4.0L inline-six? Its power output was similar to the Tornado and fuel injection would make it more desirable off-road.

Perhaps something crazier, like a 5.7L Hemi out of a later-model truck?

Or maybe just go extreme with a Magnum V-10? Yes.

With the V10 in the workshop, the build needed a drivetrain.

An NP205 transfer case and an NV4500 five-speed transmission were added to the pile.

From the fuel system and brakes to a custom-built winch bumper, engine mounts, and roll cage, a fair amount of the truck is hand-built or fabricated, including a rack for an over-the-tray tent.

Under the front of the Jeep is a closed-knuckle Dana 60 axle retained by factory leaf springs in 'spring-under' configuration. Shock absorbers are Monroe Gas-Magnum shocks. Extremely short diff ratios of 5.87:1 are rock-crawling ratios.

The Dana 70 rear axle has an Eaton Detroit locker for traction,

Removing leaves one and three from the Kaiser's factory leaf pack made the rear end more pliable and 1/4-inch steel differential covers from 999 Off-road keep the internals safe.

Rear suspension on the 1967 Kaiser Jeep M715 overland build includes stock leaves and Monroe gas shocks.

The 37-inch Goodyear HMMWV tires aren't the quietest or most road-capable things ever, but they do fit the look of the Kaiser.

A 15,000-pound Warn winch is mounted on a fabricated steel front bumper.

Trail-Gear rocksliders welded to the frame are good insurance on rough trails.

Contrasting the well-worn exterior of the 1967 Kaiser Jeep M715, extra work went into the cab, making it every bit as sharp-looking as it was comfortable and clean. The door panels are covered in plaid flannel fabric, the seats reupholstered in new leather.

These trucks might be quietly rusting in back yards in the Ozarks or the Carolinas but they are very rare in New Zealand, more so than the J20 pickup, which was sold here new as a right-hand drive truck.

Electric truck on the rise

Ford triples F-150 Lightning Production

Ford is increasing production on models in high demand, with plans to triple the amount of F150 Lightnings it builds this year.

After a stoppage due to a battery issue that's now been fixed, production of the electric F-150 will resume on March 13.

It's no surprise Ford wants to sell as many vehicles as possible this year, and today the company detailed plans to strongly increase production of several models that are in high demand. The most notable of these is the F-150 Lightning. Ford says it's on track to build triple the amount compared with last year.

The plan follows Lighting production being halted for multiple weeks due to a battery issue. Ford has since fixed the problem and resumed production in mid-March. said production will resume on March 13. With assembly back in motion, the company hopes to be building 150,000 Lightnings annually by the end of this year. In 2022, Ford said it sold 15,617 electric F-150s.

The F150 remains the most popular new vehicle sold in America, and the Lightning is just one of the Ford models that are in high demand. Others that will see their production ramped up include the compact-sized Bronco Sport SUV and the Maverick pickup truck. To meet demand in North and South America, the company plans to increase production by more than 80,000 units in 2023.

Wildtrak X arrives

Bilstein suspension enhances new version

Ford New Zealand has expanded its Ranger lineup with the new off-road focused Wildtrak X.

The Wildtrak X bridges the gap between the high-performance Ranger Raptor and the recreation-oriented Wildtrak and is designed for customers who want greater off-road capability and smart features that support their passion for adventure without compromising the Ranger's 3500kg braked towing capacity.

"We know customers love the versatility their Ranger offers them. Wildtrak X really captures their desire for exploration, with new hardware and features so they can head across the country or go further off-road than ever before," said Simon Rutherford, Managing Director, Ford New Zealand.

Elevating the Wildtrak X's on- and off-road ability are core wheel and suspension improvements. The Ranger Wildtrak X's Bilstein Position-Sensitive Dampers not only allows drivers to go further off the beaten track, but also improves on-road cornering manners. This is thanks to End Stop Control Valve (ESCV) technology within the Bilstein dampers. The position-sensitive dampers allow for better fine-tuning and calibration so that the Wildtrak X's on-road comfort matches its off-road performance. With a monotube design and nitrogen-charged external reservoir, the Bilstein dampers have an increased tuning bandwidth that allows for dual driving characteristics.

WILDTRAK
Ford
RANGER

MOTORHOME MANIA STAYS HOT

Things really kicked off four years ago when Covid made us all stay home.

But interest in motorhomes, campers and rooftop tents had been growing for a decade or so.

The attraction of going 4WD adventuring and returning to a base nearby drives our fascination with the many options that create a 'home-from-home' close to wild places.

Public 'expo' shows like the recent Covi Motorhome, Caravan and Outdoor Supershow lay out the many and varied ways 4WDers can escape to the backblocks and do it in comfort.

We took a look at what was on offer.

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Where to go, what to see and do – and when

15 APRIL

NZFWDA National 4x4 Trial – Round 6

Hosted by Thames Valley 4WD Club at 8800 State Highway 26 Puriri . Round 6 of the 4x4 National Trial 2022/2023 season. Fun day out for the whole family watching extreme 4x4 competition vehicles go head to head. For more details visit; *nz4x4trials.co.nz/calendar-and-results/*

29 APRIL

JG Civil 2023 ORANZ Short Course Championship

Hosted by Waikato Offroad racing Club at Tect Park, Tauranga. $10 an Adult, $5 a child or $25 per family. *www.oranz.co.nz*

14 MAY

Suzuki Extreme 4x4 Challenge

Held at 2278 SH3 Turakina it will feature the top 10 drivers from the 2022/2023 National 4x4 Trials season. Starts 9.00am. Again the top 10 drivers and vehicles will get automatic entry meaning only the best from the NZFWDA National series drivers & 4x4 Trials competition vehicles in the country are eligible. We are proud to have Suzuki back on board as our naming rights sponsor, as they have been for the last seven years. With awesome spectator viewing, live commentary, steep hills, vertical banks, massive jumps, mud and speed, combined with good food, easy spectator viewing and live commentary all makes for a fantastic day out with mates and family. Lock the date in your diaries now. Adults $20, Family $60. Hot food & refreshments will be available. For more info see the *Suzuki Extreme 4x4 Challenge Facebook page*

20 MAY

Off Road Racing National Championship; Round 2

Hosted by Nelson Club, Spooners Forest, Nelson *www.oranz.co.nz*

27 MAY

'Give it a go' 4WD enduro

Hosted by 4x4 Events and held at Alford Forest, Methven. Club trucks/Basic trailer trucks for beginners and those who want to have a go. $50 per truck for NZ4WDA member, $55 per truck for non-NZ4WDA member.

Great fun day out with like minded people. BBQ on site. Camping available on site. Showers & Toilets. Everyone welcome. Gates on at 9am, Vehicle checks 9.30, Briefing at 10 with racing starting at 11am.

Safety requirements; include *Helmets, Seatbelts, Winch, Mud Tyres, Ground Anchor, 2 people per truck.*

For more details and registration visit *https://4x4events.co.nz/index.php/give-it-a-go-enduro/*

4 JUNE

Off Road Racing National Championship; Round 3

Woodhill Forest hosted by Auckland Offroad racing Club. *www.oranz.co.nz*

8 – 9 JULY

Off Road Racing National Championship; Rounds 4 & 5

West Melton, hosted by Christchurch Club. Short Course and endure (separate rounds). *www.oranz.co.nz*

2 SEPTEMBER

Off Road Racing National Championship; Round 6

Hosted by Waikato Offroad Racing Club at Tect Park, Tauranga. *www.oranz.co.nz*

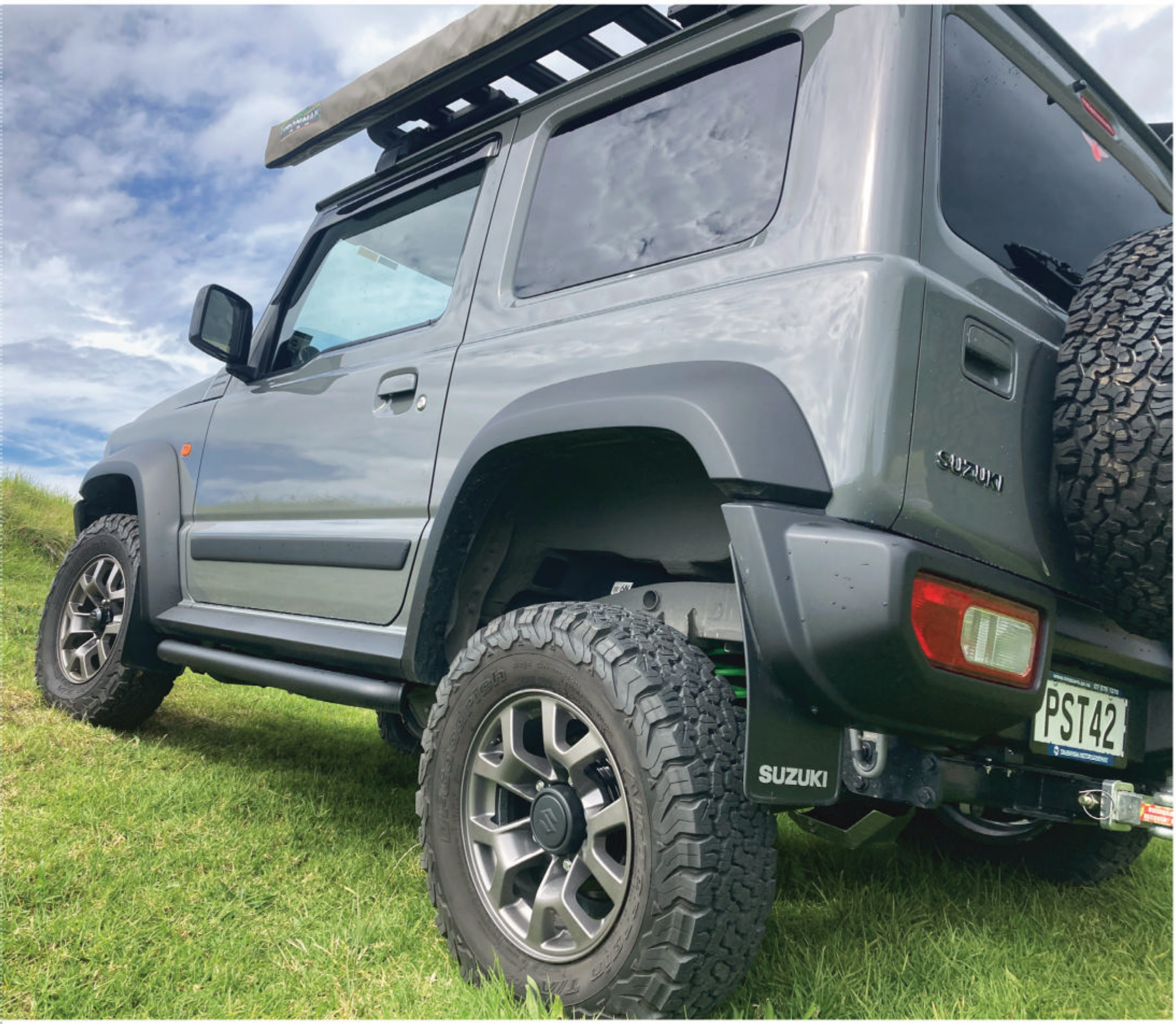
20 – 22 OCTOBER

Off Road Racing National Championship

Final and the return of the NZ1000. Held at Slim's farm, Kurow. *www.oranz.co.nz*

HasTrak
886

If you, your club or anyone you know are planning any events, please get in contact with our Event Manager Ashley Lucas. We can assist in promotion of the event and may be able to offer some assistance in other areas. **Email Ashley@nz4wd.co.nz**



Cult build

New Jimny ready to hit the dirt

It's no secret that for many, the Suzuki Jimny is the 'it' 4WD of the year. Twelve months ago, *NZ4WD* tested the limited-run Safari edition, and loved it for is compact, can-do honesty. More recently, we have seen these little trucks adopted by motorhome set, who like to bring along something small, light and economic for grocery runs and local exploring while touring.

This tribe are abandoning their tatty Jap import tow-along sedans and hatchbacks in favour of off-road capable small 4WDs. That's not silly.

Tauranga-based couple Darryl and Cathy Holden are no strangers to 4WD adventure, and have just completed their own Jimny build, using the higher specification Sierra model.

"Over the years, Cathy and I have owned a series 3 Land Rover, an FJ Land Cruiser with a 327 Chev, we also owned a Suzuki 413 and a Suzuki Escudo," Darryl says.

They then travelled overseas for a while and ended up living in Australia where in 2010 the couple bought a GU Nissan Patrol and kitted it out for outback exploring. "We did all the usual outback modifications for overland adventures," Darryl said.

Some epic trips followed, including two adventures in the daunting Simpson Desert.

Back in New Zealand, the couple retired early and were traveling around

1

1: Full suspension upgrade improves grip and bounce-reaction.

2: Recovery hooks and an Ironman winch.

3: The front suspension has been matched to the rear.

4: Ready for adventure, the Jimny carries tools and an awning on its roof rack.

PST42
IRONMAN

2

3

4

1

Darryl and Cathy Holden's Suzuki Jimny Sierra build

- 40mm Lift kit with Nitro charger shocks.
- Castor correction.
- 215/60 R15 BF Goodrich A/T. (Darryl felt 235 tyres on the manual would draw too much power on take-off.)
- Iron Man Raid no loop bull bar.
- Iron Man Monster 9000kg winch with synthetic rope.
- Recovery eyes on the front.
- Snorkel.
- Diff breathers.
- Awning.
- Tow bar.
- Rock Sliders. (These were ARB, Darryl went ARB as they tuck up nicely under the sill. "The Ironman ones stick out, meaning when occupants get out, their trousers or legs brush the bar, picking up dirt, mud or whatever is on it".)
- Yakima flat rack.
- Yakima lockable shovel holders.

2

New Zealand in a 2020 Jeep Grand Cherokee Trailhawk towing an Australian off-road caravan. Ill health forced a revision of the travel plan and a switch to a motor home.

Like many, the pair had been eyeing Suzuki's Jimny, and an idea began to form: using experience gained with previous vehicles and specifically the Australian Patrol, they would fit out a 4WD to tow behind the motor home.

There was no mucking around; a green

Jimny was duly ordered. A slight diversion occurred when they saw a grey Jimny and changed their colour preference accordingly.

"The weight was the biggest factor and then came 4WD ability, the only real option was a Suzuki Jimny five-speed manual as its tare weight from new was only 1100 kg."

Though some prospective owners have been somewhat disappointed by lengthy wait times for delivery, an eight month wait time actually worked in their favour with the switch from caravan to motor home happening at the same time.

Even better, the Jimny is a 2023 first-registration.

"From new we got Tauranga Motor Company to install speakers in the rear, weather shields, diff protectors, side protection strips on the doors and a duraseal treatment."

When the vehicle arrived, Darryl took it straight in for upgrades.

"Before the Jimny arrived I had researched what mods to do and what brands to use. One of the main issues with a standard Suzuki Jimny is the handling on standard suspension and tyres; they can be quite unnerving if you aren't ready for some bumps."

He had decided to go with Iron Man product, fitted by the local dealer, Auto Super Shoppe in Greerton Tauranga.

"They are the Iron Man specialists for Tauranga, and Eddie Dreaneen had his own Jimny all done up the way I wanted. Eddie and I had been talking over the mods for a few months and we came up with a plan; he had all items ordered and ready for when it was handed over.

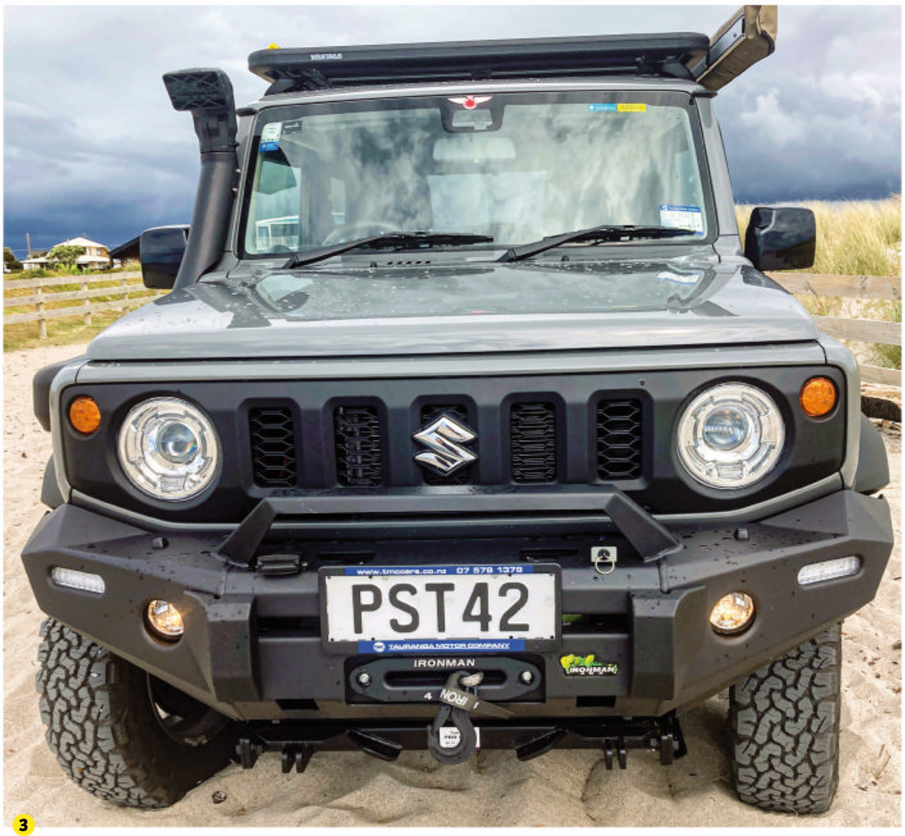
"When Suzuki handed the Jimny to us we drove it straight to Auto Shoppe with only 14km on the clock. Eddie's team did a fantastic job as I gave them a huge list of modifications to be done in one go.

The weight after all modifications is now 1350kg (an increase of 250kg), but Darryl says the wheels, tyres and suspension now work together to deliver highway speed handling "like a sports car"

"It corners really well, no bounce or bumping off-line."

An A-frame for towing the wee rig behind the motor home has been bought, and attached to the custom front bumper using a Blue OX A frame base plate installed by Probars in Hamilton.

It's very neat, tucks up out of sight and doesn't mess with the approach angle.



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The Jimny is so new that its epic journeys are still ahead of it.

"We have only played on few hills, done some sand work and some cross loading checks. To date it performs unreal, it is so smooth traveling over large bumps in low range, I can't stop smiling when we drive it and even more on the few occasions off-road."

The couple are heading to the Tongariro National Park and the 42 Traverse for a play shortly, and say they will report back.

Also on the menu is a more ambitious South Island trip combining the motorhome and Suzuki.

1: Fully kitted, the Jimny has had a few gentle off-road trips.

2: All-terrain BF Goodrich tyres offer more grip off-road.

3: Ironman bumper adds functionality and good looks.

4: Off to the 42: Darryl and Cathy Holden are about to give the Jimny its first real off-road adventure.

4

Super 4WD builds in Greerton

Auto Super Shoppe delivers Ironman upgrades

Colorado, new Ranger, Hilux and the mighty wee Jimny: Greerton Auto Super Shoppe has enhanced a broad range of 4WDs for off-road use.

Owner Eddie Dreeanen says his company offers 4WD enthusiasts accessories, upgrades and builds using Ironman products.

"People look for best-quality gear when they are upgrading, and we are passionate about 4WD adventuring. We stock Ironman because the gear is very hiugh quality, designed to withstand harsh use in work or recreation."

Clustering the 4WD work under the Auto Super Shoppe banner makes the business a one stop shop for servicing, warrants of fitness and more. There's also an in-house tyre shop, and Eddie says the company accesses tyres from several wholesalers, ensuring there's a wide choice available for customers.

SUSPENSION | BULLBARS | TYRES | UTE & 4x4 GEAR
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This sporting life

Big torque, luxe 'feel', all the expected Ranger abilities

1

2

Could the Ranger Sport be the best of the bunch?It's no secret among 4WDers that Ford's 2023 Rangers set the mid-size 4X4 ute segment on fire since their launch.

A fresh, bold design, a broad range of diesel engines and class-leading technology has kept the 'Next-Gen' Ranger at the top of many potential ute buyers' shopping lists.

The 2023 Ford Ranger is almost all-new from the ground up. The central body structure including the cabin, door openings and glasshouse are close to the same as the PX series Ranger in size and shape with a few revisions, while everything else – including the chassis, sheet metal, interior, powertrains, cargo tub and suspension – is either new or heavily revised.

Among the 4WD models, the new kid on the block is the Ranger Sport, with a muscular V6 diesel engine. Ford heavily revised and upgraded its 3.0-litre 'Lion' V6 engine for the Sport. It has also been used in 2.7-litre form in the sorely missed Territory.

The same engine is also fitted to the F150.

In Sport spec, it now produces 184kW of power at 3,250rpm and 600Nm of torque between 1,750-2,250rpm. These numbers eclipse the 147kW and 470Nm of the old 3.2-litre five-cylinder engine. Sport thus offers the most torque in the class. That low-rpm peak torque is what most 4WDers are looking for.

On the road and in the bush, the V6 delivers its grunt seamlessly through

SPECIFICATIONS

2023 Ford Ranger Sport

Price: $79,490

Engine: 3.0-litre turbo-diesel

Max power: 184kW@3,250rpm

Max torque: 600Nm at 1,750-2,250rpm

Transmission: ten speed torque-converter automatic,4WD

Economy: 8.4l/100km*

CO2 emissions: 222gm/km*

Front suspension: independent front suspension with stabiliser bar

Rear suspension: multi-link with stabiliser bar

Wheelbase: 3,270mm

Kerb weight: 2,346kg

Turning circle: 12.0m

Towing: 3,500kg braked/750kg unbraked

Brakes: ventilated disc front/ disc rear

Wheels/Tyres: Black/ machined face 18" alloy wheels/255/65 x 18 tyres

Safety: ANCAP five stars

*manufacturer figure

3

4

Ford's 10-speed automatic transmission which has been revised for this new application.

By far the biggest advance that the V6 and 10-speed brings to the Ranger and 4x4 ute category, is a level of refinement previously unseen in the mid-size segment.

The Ranger's ladder-frame chassis has been made wider for a number of reasons, including fitting the V6 engine up front and widening the wheel track for improved driving dynamics.

The 50mm extra width in the wheel track and equal amount added to the length of the wheelbase are felt in the vehicle's stability and ride control.

The track width takes the wheels out to the extremes of the body which benefits both ride and handling, as does moving the rear shock absorbers to the outside of the chassis rails where they have more leverage on the axle.

These changes and increased dimensions give the Ranger a more sure-footed and controlled presence on the road, adding to the feeling of it being a bigger truck.

1: Tough looks clad an equally tough drivetrain. V6 torque is excellent.

2: Sport gives Ranger fans a hint of its power plant.

3: Ranger 'office' is as good as ever.

4: Tyres are not an aggressive tread design, but very capable.

WRANGLER
TERRITORY AT/S

1

GOODYEAR
WRANGLER
TERRITORY AT/S

2

3

4

1 & 2: Sport alloys clad in Goodyear Wranglers.

3: Ranger Sport was at home on tarmac, gravel and forest tracks.

4: Door mirrors are robust and 'right-sized'.

The coil front and leaf-spring rear suspension feels firm over rough roads, but never jittery or uncomfortable. This ride quality is the small price to pay in a vehicle designed to carry a tonne on-board or tow 3.5 tonnes.

The new full-time 4WD system of the new Ranger is a benefit on rough tracks and wet roads, where it also improves the sure-footedness of the chassis.

It's also handy in the suburbs where, on wet roads, part-time systems in 2WD are prone to wheelspin when pulling out into traffic or when towing heaving loads.

The Ranger's new chassis also benefits the ute when driving off road, allowing for more articulation of the rear axle to keep the wheels on the ground in uneven terrain.

The Ranger has never really suffered in this regard, but it is now better than it was in the outgoing model. The independent front end still picks up wheels quite easily.

When those tyres do lose traction in the rough or slippery terrain, the Ranger has an effective electronic traction control system (ETC) which remains active when the standard rear differential lock (RDL) is engaged. Not all 4x4 utes do this and it makes a big difference in their capability.

We took the Sport south, into the Waikato, and found interesting trails through the forest blocks near Onewhero. Heading along a rut up a steep, loose surface, the Ranger is prone to allow the wheel to slip a fraction before the ETC catches it and sends the drive where it is most effective.

Playing with the drive modes and selecting the 'mud and ruts' setting sharpens up the response to better suit these conditions.

All new 4x4 Ford Rangers except the Raptor have a 3500kg towing rating when pulling a trailer with brakes.

The Gross Combined Mass (GCM) for the Ranger Sport V6 is 6400kg.

These important figures are at or near the top of the mid-size ute category and are sure to entice buyers who need to haul a heavy boat or caravan.

As *NZ4WD* noted last year, the Ranger's cabin and accommodation raise the bar in the ute segment. The Sport gets a 'portrait' format 10-inch centre screen running navigation, audio, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, air conditioning and an off-road screen that controls the off-road modes, diff lock and hill descent control.

Ford has included dials rather than buttons for the most used functions of audio volume and temperature controls as these are faster and easier to use.

Beneath the screen is a wireless charging pad for mobile phones.

The driver sits behind a steering column that is now adjustable for both reach and height. The driver gets a digital dash that is configurable to display a wide range of information.

The Sport's leather seats have taller seat backs than the previous Rangers that better follow the shape of the spine for improved comfort and safety. They are power adjustable in the front row.

The Ranger has a 2022 five-star ANCAP rating and was the highest scoring 'one-tonne' ute to be tested by ANCAP to date.

Helping it to attain such a score are nine airbags, three-point lap/sash seatbelts all-round, childproof door locks, intelligent adaptive cruise control, blind-spot monitoring with cross-traffic alert and trailer coverage, speed-limit recognition, lane-keep assist with road-edge detection and driver alert.

It also has pre-collision assist with autonomous emergency braking (AEB), trailer sway control, front and rear parking sensors plus a rear-view camera.

The side steps at the rear of the cargo tub sides to improve access to the back are a first in the class and a great addition across the range.

Sport's 800mm wading depth is class leading; its unladen ground clearance is 234mm.

The wider wheel track has also given Ranger a wider cargo tub that accommodates a 'Euro'-size pallet between the wheel arches. It also features LED lighting, four tie-down points, a 12-volt power outlet, those signature tub-side steps and an easy-lift tailgate.

Ranger Sport rides on 18-inch alloys wearing 255/65-section Goodyear Wrangler tyres. The Wrangler were good in the loose stuff, and quite quiet in tarmac.

The new Ford Ranger Sport gives buyers another option, slipping into the range just under the Wildtrak. It offers buyers a bit more luxury such as the leather seats and wireless phone charger, has an urban feel but gives away none of Ranger's off-road prowess.

Preferences are subjective, but the Ranger Sport mounts a convincing argument for Kiwis looking to upgrade their 4WD.

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Nissan Xtrail

Petrol power now, e-power soon

Nissan is very excited about the new fourth generation X-Trail. With reason.

It doesn't take long behind the wheel to realise the Japanese carmaker has thrown everything including the kitchen sink at this vehicle for a crack at the podium in one of our country's hottest-selling segments.

X-Trail has come a long way since the boxy gen-1 version. It's been around for 21 years and as mentioned, this is its fourth generation.

A fresh approach to design, technology, packaging and materials have been built into this mid-size SUV from Japan. There's a reason for that: mid-SUV is one of the most hotly contested sectors in the market.

Like its smaller sibling, the Qashqai, the latest X-Trail is built on Nissan's latest CMF-C platform that uses significantly more lightweight materials, yet delivers increased torsional stiffness for improved ride and handling characteristics. The new platform (also shared with the latest Mitsubishi Outlander) means the engine is mounted lower into the chassis, which improves driving dynamics.

Many of the body panels are aluminium and there's more high-strength steel than ever, while the suspension and steering have received noticeable upgrades that not only make this vehicle a far better driving experience but also deliver a greater towing capacity – 500kg more than its predecessor. Nevertheless, those who seek more grunt might want to hold off for the more powerful (and more efficient) e-Power hybrid version which is already on the way.

The new platform is noticeably more rigid, with 27 per cent better torsional stiffness. Body roll is minimised, and the steering feels more responsive.

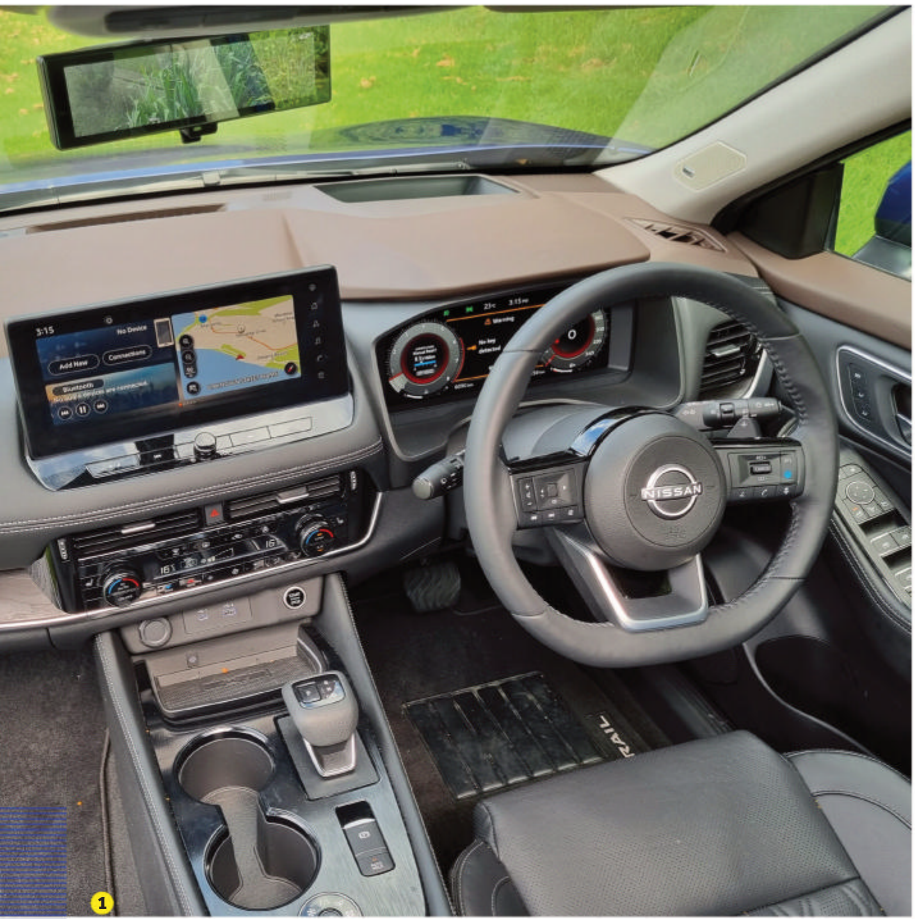
Ride comfort is generally good too, even over very average, coarse-chip surfaces and gravel roads. The ride is skewed towards a firmer set up in sync with X-Trail's more rigid platform.

Inside, it's impressive. In the top grades owners get 35.4 inches of big-screen technology up front, including a 10.8-inch head-up display – the largest in-segment image size, Nissan says. Our test vehicle was a full-fruit Ti-L.

Attention to detail is obvious here. Even the wipers are new splash-free versions, while connectivity includes wireless Apple CarPlay and charging along with both USB-A and USB-C charging ports, front and back. The look and feel is premium.

X-Trail still uses a naturally-aspirated 2.5-litre four-cylinder petrol engine paired with a CVT transmission (exclusively) but it's been tweaked to deliver more power and torque along with quicker response.

There's an e-Power hybrid version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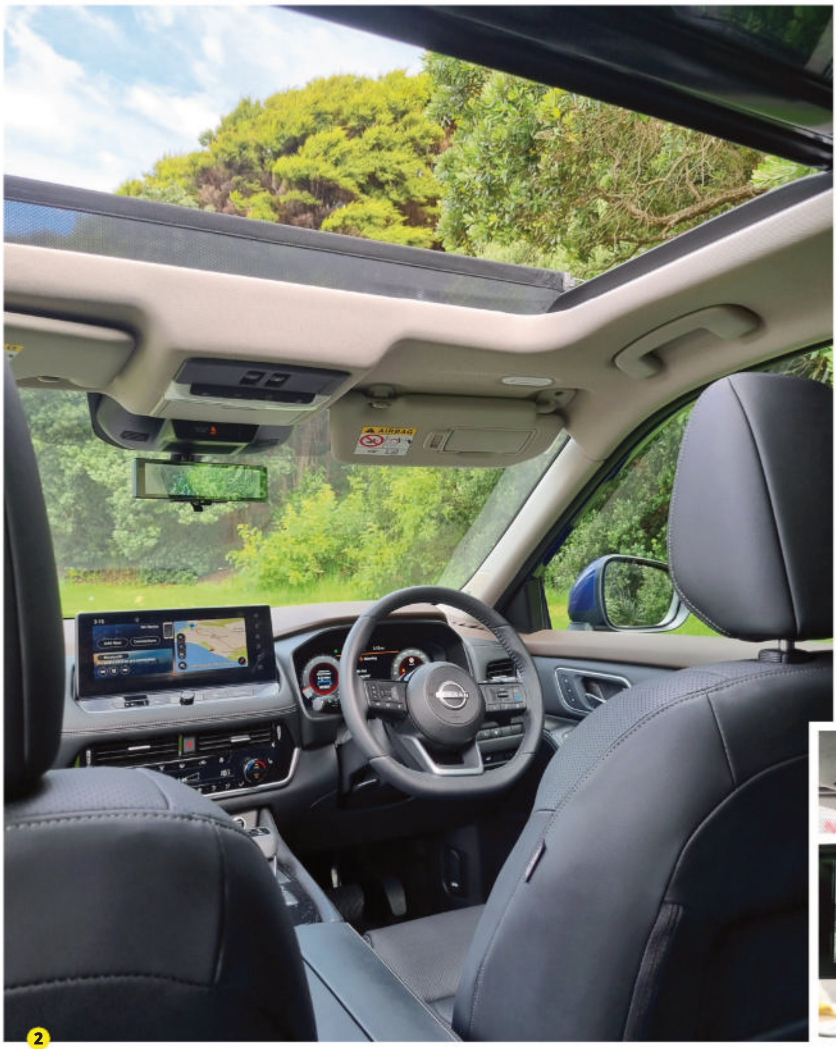
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coming in 2023 too. That could be 15 per cent or more of X-Trail sales. Performance and efficiency benefits, extra kit and class-leading active safety suite it packs.

This is a thoughtful and more resolved design that will give the new Nissan more than a fighting chance against a host of big-selling rivals.

The flagship Ti and Ti-L grades are all AWD five seaters.

First sit reveals the truth: the leather upholstery is genuine and the seats are thickly cushioned and superbly comfortable for all shapes and sizes, with sufficient bolster to hold occupants steady in rough conditions.

The leather-wrapped steering wheel, with a squared-off base, is good too.

A tasteful soft-touch brown dash top with contrasting dark grey console is standard across all variants.

The X-Trail still gets old school dials and knobs for the climate control and audio in amongst the high-tech touch screen. Call us old-fashioned, but knobs and dials just work better from an ergonomic point of view. We reckon drivers tend to fiddle with screen-based settings just once, where dials and switches and knobs enable easier on-the-fly adjustments of commonly used functions.

There's plenty of space and storage options for driver and passengers.

Up front in the 'office', the new-style stubby shifter has freed up space for a wider-than-usual wireless charging pad and two cupholders.

The centre console itself is a floating or 'bridge' design. Directly below is an out-of-view storage space for items like handbags or even a laptop, as well as a new butterfly-style console box – giving access for rear passengers.

Both USB-C and USB-A charging ports are available for both seat rows.

Climbing into the back row is dead easy given the rear doors open up at an 85-degree angle with the rear seats on rails should you need extra rear legroom. Rear sunshades will be great for kids or pets.

Rear seat legroom is good with the 40/20/40 split-fold seats in their most rearward position. Not quite Pathfinder, but not bad in the mid-SUV class.

All four doors also get larger-than-normal door pockets for 500ml bottles.

There's also a five-point ISOFIX which enables a centre child seat position, along with three child seat anchorage points.

Boot space in the X-Trail is maximised at 585 litres (depending on the rear seat position).

There's only one engine available across the X-Trail range until the e-Power hybrid arrives: a 2.5-litre naturally aspirated petrol four-cylinder producing 135kW at 6000rpm and 244Nm at 3600rpm. That's a 9kW and 18Nm increase over the outgoing model. It's mated to an updated version of the outgoing model's CVT automatic.

The new 'multi-mode' on-demand AWD option has selectable Eco, Standard and Sport modes plus five different traction modes for bitumen, dirt, ice and snow. There's also a hill-descent control function.

Nissan claims the Ti-L uses 7.8L/100km on the combined cycle. As mentioned earlier, for those who want considerably more punch from their X-Trail while consuming less fuel, the upcoming e-Power hybrid claims to use just 6.1L/100km.

The fuel tank measures an adequate but not generous 55 litres.

The engine/transmission is reasonably well muted inside the cabin. Using the paddle-shifters enhances the CVT's stepped-gear character though most will simply opt to use it in 'do it for me' auto mode..

Being a naturally aspirated petrol engine, the X-Trail can get noisy under hard acceleration on the flat or climbing a hill. Its engine redline is a relatively high 6,000rpm.

However, around town the 2.5-litre engine quickly settles into an effortless driving experience requiring a light throttle only and very little commotion.

The new 2023 Nissan X-Trail has already achieved a five-star ANCAP safety rating, scoring 90 per cent for child occupancy protection and 91 per cent for adult occupancy protection. The New X-Trail has seven airbags as standard and comes with a suite of safety technology, scoring a massive 97 per cent for safety assist in ANCAP testing.

With the Xtrail on sale now and e-power on the way, it's tempting to wonder whether there is still a purpose for Qashqai. Though the Ti-L is unashamedly urban, it has decent rough-road smarts to perform the role its market demands.

SPECIFICATIONS

2023 Nissan X-Trail Ti-L

Price: $59,990

Engine: 2.5-litre petrol
Max power: 135kW at 6,000rpm
Max torque: 244Nm at 3,600
Transmission: CVT automatic, intelligent 4WD
Economy: 7.4L/100km*
CO2 emissions: 204gm/km*
Front suspension: independent front suspension with stabiliser bar
Rear suspension: multi-link with stabiliser bar
Wheelbase: 2,705mm
Kerb weight: 1,672kg
Turning circle: 11.0m
Towing: 2,000kg braked/750kg unbraked
Brakes: ventilated disc front/ disc rear
Wheels/Tyres: 19" alloy wheels/235/55 x 19 tyres
Safety: ANCAP five stars

*manufacturer figures

1: The X-Trail's office put essentials close at hand.

2: Second-row visibility is excellent. So is the massive sunroof.

3: The video rear view is uncannily good.

4: Proper space for adults.

5: 585-litre cargo area is practical and capacious.

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Get muddy – and get back!

Safe recovery practices and the right gear

It's that time of year. After a pretty ordinary summer, we head into winter, and the mudholes, washouts and river crossings are becoming trickier.

With the right technique, and the right gear, there's little to fear.

Here are a few top tips for safe recoveries:

- ➔ Use the correct tool for the job.
- ➔ Never use a tow strap for kinetic recoveries.
- ➔ Keep that hi-lift jack clean.
- ➔ Don't use damaged equipment.
- ➔ Use the correct shackles.
- ➔ Re-roll the winch cable after use.
- ➔ Keep the equipment clean.
- ➔ Use your own gear.

Personal safety and the protection of property are paramount when considering 4WD recovery.

Never attempt to recover a vehicle without all the necessary equipment.

Only use equipment that is properly rated and in serviceable condition. If in doubt, don't use it.

Ensure that only the people required for the recovery are present. All spectators should be kept at a safe distance.

Maintain good communications maintained between participants and bystanders at all times. This is best achieved by use of UHF radio.

Due to the nature of synthetic fibres, recovery straps require rest periods between use to return to their original length and capacity. Be aware that excessive pulls on a recovery strap over a short period of time can cause build-up of heat and possible failure.

Always consider your impact on the environment. As responsible 4WD users we are charged with caring for the areas we visit.

During wet periods, 4WDs can have a devastating effect on our tracks. Long term damage can result in temporary or even permanent track closures. Before travelling, obtain a list of road closures from the relevant conservation and environment offices.

Make a minimum of attempts at passing an obstacle before trying to recover the vehicle. Excessive wheel spin can cause damage to both the track surface and vehicle components.

It is important to ensure that only correctly mounted and rated recovery points are used for vehicle recoveries. Check the vehicle manufacturers hand book for recovery point locations. Tie down points are not suitable for vehicle recovery so aftermarket recovery hooks should be fitted.

Do not use a tow ball or tie down point as a recovery point. Tow balls are not made of high tensile material and have been known to fail from stress, with the potential to become lethal missiles. If you are unsure of the type of recovery points on your vehicle, consult the manufacturer.

When winching, use a recovery damper – a device designed to restrict the whipping action of a strap or winch cable in the event of failure, therefore reducing the possibility of vehicle damage and personal injury. It should be fitted to the middle third of a strap or winch cable. Only bow shackles that are load rated should be used for vehicle recovery. Load ratings are visible on the shackle and will be in the form of WLL (working load limit) or SWL (safe working load). Shackles with a rating of at least 3.25t should be the minimum and are suitable for attaching one end of a strap. 4.75t rated shackles have a larger eye and are more suited to applications such as tree trunk protectors where two ends of the strap are fitted in the shackle.

Welcome, now, to our guide of the right equipment for safe recovery.

A winch for every need

Road, farm, bush or bog, Kingone has the right stuff

Kingone Winch has winches to suit a wide range of 4WDs and commercial machines.

Over the years Auckland 4X4 has supplied winches to suit customers 4WDs from Unimogs to Suzukis and the 'farmer's best friend', the ATV.

The range starts with the ATV3000 and 4000lb units available in 12 and 24 volts. They come standard with wireless remote and synthetic rope. Great for farm machinery and even boat trailers.

One model that has been running hot over the past 12 months is our KDS8000lb winch, designed to fit perfectly with the new Suzuki Jimny. Whatever winch bar is fitted it fits easily and packs great features like synthetic rope and wireless remote as standard. With low current draw it is perfect for getting a Suzuki unstuck in any tricky 4WD adventure.

Moving forward to the heavy hitters that have been around for well over 10 years in NZ. The TDS9.5SR-Raptor has been the main stay for the exploding 4WD ute market, with its 156.1 planetary gear system it offers high-speed, no-load rope recovery, plus the grunt and the speed of 2.1mpm on a 9500lb pull. Also, low current draw so the standard battery is more than adequate for recreational four wheeling in most double cab utes.

For the customer that requires the extra security of more power there is the ORCA-13000lb, all the same features as the Raptor but with a 206.1 gear ratio and a 10mm synthetic rope to cover the 5.897kg pulling power.

The Commercial range starts at 20000lbs and can be configured in either 12v or 24v and steel or synthetic rope. Designed totally for commercial purposes and farming applications.

New products that have just been added to the range include hydraulic winch and DC hoists 12 and 24v.

For more information contact a local dealer or the master importer Phillbrook Technologies on **0800 785 583.**

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Everything you could want for 4WD recovery

Equipment tested in the harshest conditions

There are those who deliberately go out to get bogged. Just so they can use their de-bogging gear. Ironman's equipment may bring a few more 4WDers over to that lifestyle.

Ironman 4x4 products have been developed in the harshest proving ground in the world: Australia. Sold in more than 120 countries, Ironman products have been the first choice for customers for more than 50 years.

Ironman 4x4 Monster winches

Redesigned and upgraded, these winches feature stronger motors, heavy duty casings, synthetic ropes and competition-style solenoids. They are the only winch on the market with a motor breather.

There are two monster winches: 9500lb and 12000lb with the option of steel or synthetic cable.

The greatest new feature of the range of winches is the fully sealed motor with a breather that enables it to equalise changes in temperature and pressure by means of a remote breather hose that can be placed high in the vehicle away from water. Issues tend to arise when winches come into contact with water or when they heat and cool drawing in moisture that results in corrosion, especially when they are not used or serviced regularly. The sealed motor stays dry while the remote breather allows it to breathe to outside away from water.

The 12000lb monster winch has a 6hp (4.5kw) series-wound motor while the 9500lb uses a 5.5hp (4.1kw) series-wound motor. Both have sealed waterproof bearings at both ends of the armature for better stability and reduced friction. The armatures are individually balanced for high-speed operation and all wiring is coated for heat protection. Ironman have added an external heat sink with increased surface area to transmit heat away from the unit.

The winch gearbox has been designed with precision machine-hardened gears which eliminate float and give smooth operation. The clutch mechanism uses a sliding system with straight cut gears which eliminates any gearbox slip and the handle has been notched to ensure it remains in the selected position.

The rotatable gearbox allows easy hand access and positioning of the clutch handle for fitment to most bars. This results in a low profile clutch handle with for a more universal fit. Gearboxes are completely sealed and use premium high quality lithium grease to reduce the effect of heat, water and oxidisation. The gear reduction is 265:1 and has a three-stage planetary system.

The Ironman control box is waterproofed and sealed to resist water contamination reducing the risk of shorting out. The solenoid used is completely sealed and has tungsten tipped contacts providing long life and resistance to arcing. Operation of the winch is by means of one controller where the plug in and wireless remote are integrated into a single hand piece for ease of operation. It can easily be switched to wireless mode and used up to 30 metres away and also comes with an inbuilt LED light. Wireless remotes are individually programmed for each winch.

The winch drums have an automatic 'Cam Lock' which holds the drum in position when winching stops. Winches can either be specified with 28 metres of 8.3mm (9500lb) or 9.4mm (12000lb) wire cable or 28m of synthetic rope which is ultra-light and 45 per cent stronger by weight than steel.

All winches come with full wiring kits and instructions, four-way roller fairlead or alloy hawse fairlead, winch damper blanket and a five-year warranty. Spare parts are carried in NZ. Ironman Monster winches have a standard bolt mounting pattern which will allow them to fit to most bars and vehicles.

Snatch recovery straps

Made from 100 per cent nylon and giving 20 per cent stretch, snatch straps are the easy way to recover stuck vehicles. Two sizes are available, an 8000kg which is 75mm wide and a 11,000kg which is 100mm wide. Both are nine metres long with reinforced eyelets. Ironman 4x4 now have soft shackles available in two sizes, 14,000kg and 17,500kg. The soft shackles remove any safety concerns which can arise from the use of steel shackles. Kinetic ropes are also available with 30 per cent stretch.

Large recovery kit

This recovery kit contains all the essentials in an easy to carry durable kit bag. Content includes a nine metre, 8000kg snatch strap, two 4.7t bow shackles, a 20m 4500kg winch extension strap, a three metre 12t tree trunk protector, winch snatch block, five metre, 8mm drag chain and long leather gloves. All components have been NATA tested and proven in the harsh Australian outback.

High lift jack

These jacks have a 1050kg lifting capacity and can be used for lifting, pushing, pulling or winching. They have a low pick-up point just one cm from the base and a long lifting nose for positive contact with the load. Two units are available, a 48-inch or a 60-inch. Both have a 12-month warranty and comply with Australian and NZ safety standards. The jack has a large square base and comes complete with a carry bag.

Recovery points

Recovery is an inevitability when 4WDing. Rated recovery points are essential. Ironman 4x4 has release a new range of rated recovery points that are both rated and designed to be fitted (and sold) in pairs, allowing an equalisation strap to be used and provide multiple attachment points during a recovery.

Powder-coated red for ease of identification – especially when covered in dirt and mud, Ironman 4x4 recovery points are perfect for winching and snatch recoveries.

With holes to suit a 4.75t shackle, hooking up is simple and compatible with most recovery kit.

For more details and the full range of products see the website *www.ironman4x4.com* or phone *0508 IRONMAN.*

Featuring in June NZ4WD
A massive 4x4 ute and accessory kit out guide
The latest 4x4 models in detail with must-have accessories covered
ISUZU
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Awesome weather for southern tour

Windwhistle 4WD High Country Tour 2023

By Cindy Driscoll

Images by Amanda King and Cindy Driscoll

A great drive for a good cause – and even the weather played along. The Windwhistle 4WD High Country Tour started from the Quartz Hill Station yard on Sunday, 19 March

The sold-out tour was a fundraising event for the Windwhistle primary school.

It was a collaboration of this whole rural community, including school parents, landowners, the Hororata Community Trust and corporate sponsors. All of these groups know the value of having a primary school in this isolated rural area. Without a good school, it is challenging to attract new families to work and live in the area.

Windwhistle School needs to fundraise over $65,000 per annum just to cover basic operating costs and as well as having the task of building up a second teacher fund as the school is right on the cusp of losing ministry funding for the second teacher due to diminishing student numbers. With only 10 – 15 families at the school, this is a huge undertaking.

Georgie Harper, a member of the organising committee, said the tour was "an incredible event for our whole community."

"To have sold out in a matter of weeks was humbling, people came from around New Zealand, and even Australia, to attend. To have all of the community working towards a common goal of securing the future of our little country school is really very special."

Not only was the event a successful fundraiser, "it was also a fabulous day as we welcomed people from near and far to our land to enjoy spectacular views, varied and challenging 4WDing, delicious food and above all else great company.

"Thank you to the landowners who opened their gates for us, to the sponsors who backed us and to all the volunteers; this would not have happened without you. We hope to do more of these tours in the future, so stay tuned."

After a cuppa and tasty muffin served by school parents the convoy set off, travelling through Quartz Hill. Within 30 minutes, they found themselves on a challenging track, climbing to a ridge line to be wowed with 360-degree views.

Winding down to the valley floor Colin Guild talked over the dedicated radio frequency about the big 1973 snow, which impacted the Stations hugely, and the changes in technology since – like weather forecasting that now enables farmers to prepare for major storms.

A scenic lunch stop at Snowdon Station.

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This is a distinctive part of the country where the foothills meet the high country with varied and different ecosystems. Crossing onto High Peak Station, James Guild spoke of his family's work on this station to protect areas under QEII covenants.

The track went up Bush Gully Stream with a steady climb to a tussock plateau. The going was a little slippery from the recent rain.

The convoy then descended into Snowdon Station across newly sown paddocks to one of the most stunning lunch spots anyone could ask for. School families again greeted people with a gourmet lunch box to enjoy while sitting amongst the tussock soaking in the views. Roy Veronese and Annabel Tripp spoke during lunch about farming life on Snowdon Station and their work conserving specific areas of wetlands and bush.

Crossing into Dry Acheron Station, the landscape changed from tussock lands to more rugged and rocky. At the boundary between the Dry Acheron and Big Ben Stations, both part of the Coleridge Downs farming group, Tony Plunkett spoke of the cadet's programme they run. This programme gives young people a pathway into agriculture. Cadets come from all over New Zealand and every year there is huge interest in places, showing

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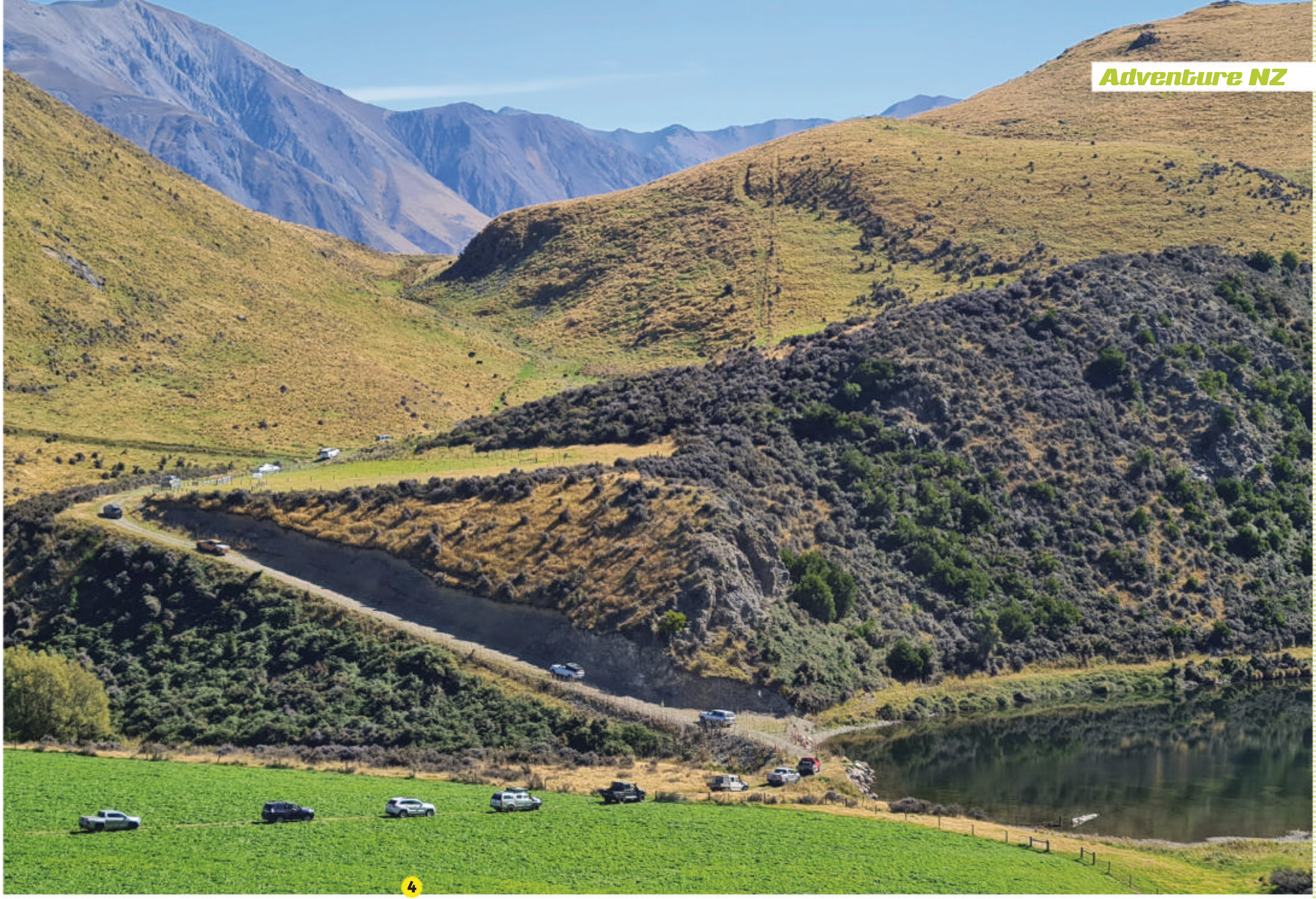
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that people are interested in working in the agriculture industry, they just need an opportunity.

A point of interest was the Black Hole Pond which is an artificially dammed pond at the mouth of a tributary valley of the Dry Acheron stream. This was created in the 1960s as a pond for fishing and a refuge for wildlife.

The impressive 'moving catering' volunteers met the convoy with afternoon tea on a terrace near the end of the track, which gave fantastic views of the Mt Hutt range, Rakaia River and the Southern Alps.

After eight hours over 45km, participants returned to the main road with big smiles and memories that will last for a long time.

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1: Gathered at the boundary of Dry Acheron and Big Ben stations.

2: Windwhistle School volunteer marshals (left to right Courtney Petrie, Sam Ballagh, Gus Lang, Georgie Harper, Amelia Dunbar, Will Innes, Taylor Pearce).

3: Quartz Hill Station.

4: Black Hole Pond on Big Ben Station.

5 & 6: Afternoon on Big Ben Station near the end of the trip.

Back to the backblocks

Taumarunui tour by Land Rover

By Kevin Isemonger

Last year the ‘Land Rover Series 1 Enthusiasts, New Zealand’ group met in Gisborne and toured south towards Wairoa on the inland road, and then travelled north via the Waimata Valley Road, popping out via Mata Road onto SH35 to enjoy a famous paua pie at ‘Café 35’ in Tokomaru Bay. Who would have ever thought that a year later – Café 35 would be closed and Tokomaru Bay would be isolated for months following the horrific devastation and loss of life on the East Coast of the North Island?

Further south at Hawke’s Bay one of our regular attendees, Jess Kyle and her family were right in the thick of it with her elderly parents isolated on the family farm in the Esk Valley and her property narrowly escaping inundation in Awatoto. Our thoughts and prayers go out to our many members and friends who were affected by Cyclone Gabriel on 13 February 2023.

Back in 2006 a convoy of pre-1958 Series 1 Land Rovers was organised to travel from Oxford near Christchurch to Cambridge in the North Island to mark 50 years of the Oxford and Cambridge ‘First Overland Expedition’ from London to Singapore in 1956. In 2011, Leon Zwetsloot sent an email to the convoy contact list to see if anyone would be interested in getting a few Series 1s together to tour some back roads and talk ‘Land Rover’ for a few days. Seven Series 1s answered the call and travelled from Taumarunui via back roads to Taihape and then on to Napier over the weekend.

This year we headed back to where it all began in 2011 to the motor camp on the eastern outskirts of Taumarunui but instead of travelling on, we used the camp as a base and travelled out each day to explore the Pureora Forest and the valleys to the west around Ohura.

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1: Work truck rests at Endean's Mill.

2: Endean's Mill in the 1950s.

3: Ngaherenga camp site.

4: John Dickinson's farm.

5: Caterpillar dozer used to extract totara.

6: Massive, ancient rimu.

7: Leon Zwetsloot fine tunes a fuel pump.

7

Above, there's always time to talk Land Rovers.
Below, a walk across Maramatahi swing bridge.

Saturday 11 March was a typical King Country autumn morning in Taumarunui, waking in our cramped little cabin – cold, damp, next to the Whanganui River. Squeaking off across the damp grass in jandals to the shower block at 5:45 to beat the stampede. The sun not breaking the surface with an early magpie yodelling to his mates in the dark. Our 'camp-mother' and tour guide for this adventure was Allen Hosking from Taupo, and his grandson Zander McEwen (now grown from less than a batten height when I last saw him to well over six foot!) and Allen had a new secret weapon to keep the flock together – a portable air horn.

The sun had not cracked the ridge to the north by the prescribed assembly time, while the weather was still making up its mind. A total of 21 pre-1958 Series 1 Land Rovers ranging from 80 inch (wheelbase) soft top 1948 through to luxurious 109-inch 1958 Station wagons were all queued up along the camp driveway at 8:00 (ish) as Leon and Allen laid down the events and routes of the day – following several 'toots' on Allen's new toy.

With puffs of blue smoke, we headed east into the sun along SH4 to turn off at Manunui onto SH41 to wind our way up the lightly misted river valley. Unfortunately for my wife, my 1955 86-inch Series 1 did not have any flash trappings of modernity – like a heater, but due to the 10-day forecast predicting heavy rain all weekend I afforded the luxury of refitting the Safari hard-top so it was not totally attuned with nature.

We rumbled along the valleys to commence our gear whining climb up through the thick mist to Waituhi Saddle at around 900m and descend in clear blue skies to Kuratau and our route north up the Western Bay Road SH32 on the shores of Lake Taupo. At the top of the lake, we turned west on Kākaho Road and by just after 10am we had stopped at the Kākaho Camp site to regroup and refresh. Interestingly, we had the greatest number of females on the run this year – so our tour guide was very cognisant of the requirement of appropriate facilities at realistic time frames. By this stage we were bathed in sunshine, albeit with a still 'central' chill in the air.

The chatter of Landy folk and native songbirds were disturbed by two sharp toots on Allen's tooter – followed a minute or so later by five toots and some shouting that got everyone's attention. To this end, a code was agreed upon as follows. Two toots means 'come to Allen'. Three toots means we are 'Oscar-Mike' (on the move). Five or more toots means Allen is not happy with our response – and probably best to come running... or run away - not sure. The one and four toot signals remained unassigned – but there were several (unprintable) suggestions. With tea swilled we all bunched up and headed into the deep shadow of regenerating eastern Pureora Forest where we were treated to some of the few remaining rimu in the forest. The 'clear-felled' areas are regenerating – but will be a long time before they form a canopy over Kākaho Road. With so many old Forestry Tracks diverting your attention off to each side, good navigation is essential.

After about 10km we turned off Kākaho Road on to Waimonoa Road and headed north to the geographical centre of the North Island. This was a bit weird – but according to the engraving on a granite obelisk, the science on how this was worked out was by cutting out a sheet of cardboard in the shape of the North Island and then attempting to balance this cardboard representation on a nail… and when it sat perfectly flat – that had to be the centre! Sounded a tad agrarian to me. I would have thought it would have been a math equation of halving the GPS co-ordinates – but a piece of cardboard on a nail? Good onya mate.

Back to Kākaho Road we continued west where in the mirk of the podocarp giants, the damp road deteriorated with severe corrugations – probably caused by light front wheel drive cars clawing their way up the steep inclines. It was about this time when the lead vintage Land Rovers encountered a Toyota Prius loaded with keen young tourists heading towards a steep clay 'staircase' section we had just come down. (No doubt on their way to see the balanced bit of cardboard.) Steve managed to convince them that perhaps it may not be such a great idea to treat their tiny rental car this way – which would explain how they came to be pointed in the same direction we were travelling in – but stopped in the middle of the road as 21 old Land Rovers drove around them.

We stopped off to inspect an abandoned 'Caterpillar' bulldozer that had been used to recover split totara battens.

Folllowing the true left bank of the Ohura River on John Dickinson's farm.

It was great to see the Department of Conservation had taken the time to set up a full cover as well as a replica trailer loaded with Totara battens with plenty of information to preserve such an important history. Too bad the same emphasis is not bestowed upon our war sites.

Like a bomb flash we burst out of the forest canopy into a bright clearing (and toilets) at the Ngaherenga Camp site marking the start of the very popular 'Timber Trail'. Here we met our guide for the afternoon, Bill Holloway, who gave us a quick history of the area and information on the Timber Trail. Bill said that the Timber Trail was to boost tourism for the former forestry-based region, and it was hoped to achieve an annual usage of 3,000 cyclists per year. Bill went on to say that for the 2022 season – despite Covid – more than 25,000 cyclists hit the 'Timber Trail' through Pureora Forest. Long may it continue.

After lunch, we were fortunate to be able to travel through private property off Maraeroa Road to head south through maturing (exotic) Forestry blocks to Maraeroa across the Mangakōkakotaea stream coming out on Ongarue Stream Road, which we followed right through the forest coming out at Piropiro Sawmill Campsite on Piropiro Road. With the aid of our Ggide (the man with all the keys), we were able to drive our vehicles up the steep incline to the stunning Maramatahi suspension bridge.

The bridge is 141m long and sits 50m above the Maramatahi River, took two years to build and cost $4m – but what an amazing structure to find. Bill, our guide, maintains the cycle track and has a special trailer which can carry 1,000kg of crushed rock to maintain the track – yet is narrow enough to fit on the bridge. Yeah – stop and process that for a second. He is driving a quad with a tonne of rock on the back over a narrow suspension bridge which sagged and swayed like a boat deck while walking on it. I think I would

Circling the wagons on the Dickinson farm.

Morning tea at Kakaho campsite.

be wearing a parachute in case I heard the hanger-clamps popping.

From Maramatahi, we slowly descended the hill climb and continued out on Piropiro Road stopping to read the information boards at the old Piropiro sawmill camping ground – which was full of tents and caravans.

Piropiro Road joined to Kokomiko Road where we turned east joining Ongarue Stream Road again to have a look over the abandoned Endean's Mill at Waimiha. Here we met with the patron of the mill Nickie Mouncey who escorted us through the remains of a preserved 'native only' mill. The owner had no interest in milling exotic timber (pine). The giant saw blades and the boiler that powered them remain as rusting reminders of a hard life of the early New Zealand bushmen and millers.

From Waimiha the race was on back to camp, as there were rumours of beer expiring its 'best-by' date before trying to find somewhere to eat. Surprisingly, Taumarunui had a shortage of places to get food. There was a Thai and Indian restaurant – which were packed, a Chinese takeaway (which was closed), a pizza shop (which closed early) and a burger bar with an hour wait – but the fish was worth the wait.

Sunday 12 March dawned another clear day – and with a shorter trip, we were allowed a slower start with a 9am meet at the BP at the other end of town. From here we crossed the Ongarue River and climbed Hospital Hill to turn off the 'Forgotten Highway' (SH43) on to Kururau Road to head up and over the high papa cliffs. This is a ripper road to drive – although, one Land Rover was not so happy and conked out just on the outskirts of town. Paul Furkert in his 1949 80" had been plagued by a tired fuel pump on his way north from Carterton and had chosen to stick with the devil he knew, rather than risk a heart transplant – but alas, the pump said 'enough'. A 'tap' can often reaffirm who is boss – some of the time, but this time it lasted until our decent on the other side of Mount Rangiriri to totally turn out the lights.

With that, tools, wires, a stand-by fuel pump, thermos flasks full of tea and slabs of fruit cake came out as we set up camp in the middle (well – no choice really) of Kururau Road – with Allen and his 'tooter' on the PRS further down the valley chasing us along as we had an appointment with our next guide. Philip Avery came to the rescue with a by-pass pump set-up he had purchased on his way through India which allowed the original pump to stay in place and attached to the existing pipes.

Surprisingly, Kururau Road continued through Otunui and over several catchments before rejoining SH43 briefly before turning north on Roto Road to follow the true left of the Ohura River. We finally met up with our local guide John Dickinson at a gateway that marked an old, abandoned road to a tiny settlement which had long since vanished into the ground. We crossed Johns Farm still following the Ohura stopping for a 'comfort stop' for the ladies at Johns house before returning to the banks of the Ohura for lunch next to a section of preserved original bush.

Following lunch, Allen attempted to give us three 'toots' (Oscar-Mike) – but his 'tooter' malfunctioned attaining two toots before blowing its horn off for the third. [CONFUSION=CONFLICT!] With that, the obedient throng zombie-walked towards Allen only to receive a defensive "I gave three toots" – backed up by five toots which sent the chooks scattering back to their vehicles. Well, that signal worked!

We made our way north over the ridge with a bit of fun to be had on a boggy section of track before popping out on the Ohura Road near the bridge by McClure Road. A brief (comfort) stop at Ohura then back over Huia Road to drop John back at his car before heading back to Taumaranui on SH43 to check those beers again.

Allen had planned for our 'Last Supper' at the Taumarunui Cosmopolitan Club, which was a bit of a 'baptism of fire' for the new kitchen manager with 60 patrons arriving – but we were all fed and watered – eventually.

Monday 13 March dawned with the expected weather change for the worse, and we gathered for our farewells in the rain with Ian and Rob heading south to catch the Cook Strait Ferry, while the remainder travelled north up SH4 to visit Andy and Linda Leaning near Ongarue where Andy restores Series 1 Land Rovers in his shed. While Andy shared his knowledge and tricks with an enthusiastic audience, Linda laid on a great morning tea for us all, which was gratefully received.

Time was moving on and most had great distances to travel to all points of the compass to Auckland, Tauranga, Whakatane, Whanganui, Wellington and the Wairarapa – so to next year chaps – wherever in the country that maybe.

Thank you to tour leaders **Allen Hosking** and **Leon Zwetsloot** and guides, **Bill Holloway, Nickie Mouncey** and **John Dickinson** and hosts for Monday, **Andy and Linda Leaning.**

1

Touring through rural history

Exploring the backblocks in convoy

Back in the 20th century when rail transport was a popular option for passengers and freight, Mangaweka was a thriving rural town, service centre to massive sheep holdings and overshadowed by the huge rail viaduct. It's still a cool place to break a journey along State Highway 1. The region itself bears closer examination for those who enjoy backblocks touring in 'real' New Zealand, as *David Coxon* explains.

While Ashley and I always enjoy travelling by ourselves and just exploring to see what is there, we also enjoy running touring trips for the 4WD club to showcase some of the more interesting areas we have found. This month we had a club trip around the Mangaweka area, with a short day getting to Mangaweka from Wellington via some backroads, a day exploring the Mangaweka area, then a final day across to Ashhurst to end the trip.

After meeting up near Paraparaumu, we enjoyed the new expressway for the run north, stopping at a riverside picnic area in Foxton for lunch. One of the challenges of getting from Wellington north to Bulls is that the rivers coming down from the Tararuas are only bridged on the main highway, meaning that there are very few options off the main highway that are more than a single road out to the coast or into the hills. However, not too far from Foxton there is one quite scenic road that parallels the main highway from Tangimoana to the Ohakea air force base just south of Bulls.

This gave us our first taste of the slower rural roads, then from Ohakea we bypassed Bulls by taking a road on the eastern side of the Rangitikei River, crossing back over the river to SH1 just in time to turn off for Marton. We took a back way through Marton, then headed into the hills for a look through quieter, more scenic rolling sheep country on a mixture of sealed and gravel roads.

There were a few photo

2

1: We couldn't resist stopping for a look over the edge of the bridge on this dramatic crossing of the Rangitikei River.

2: I nearly lost May to the blackberries during her lunchtime foraging.

3: Peaceful rolling sheep country out of Marton.

4: The white cliffs of the Rangitikei gorge were glowing in the setting sun as we settled in to the bach.

5: Storm clouds were gathering over the windfarm as we finished the trip at Ashhurst.

6: Old, abandoned houses are a feature of the area.

7: Returning from Whitecliffs on an easy gravel road.

8: It was a bit scary to realise that this old bridge over the Rangitikei River at Mangaweka was still in use a few years ago.

6

7

5

stops along this route to enjoy the scenery, and we even took in part of the iconic Turakina Valley road that runs from SH3 north of Bulls to the memorial to the Tangiwai train disaster, just out of Waiouru. It would have been nice to follow the valley north to Mangaweka, as I have done on an earlier public tagalong, but when I checked that route in detail I found that a small part of it was across private farmland – a bonus of the tagalong.

Unfortunately the public roads out of the Turakina Valley come back to SH1 at either Hunterville or Taihape. Given the time, we decided to exit at Hunterville for an easy 30min drive to Mangaweka. After settling in to our various accommodation options, we regrouped for a social evening and BBQ at a bach we were staying at with Gillian and Ashley.

The next day was Ashley's chance to lead since, having access to the bach, he has explored the area more recently that I have. We headed up the very scenic Kawhatau River valley with me trailing well behind the convoy, using the excuse of keeping out of the dust, while I kept stopping for photos. Eventually we crossed over back into the Rangitikei River valley and stopped at a bridge over the river, where there was a rather spectacular 50m drop into a sheer-sided gorge. The attraction here, apart from the amazing view, was that dropping a reasonable-sized rock into the river gave a very amplified 'gunshot' when it hit the water. This was good for at least 15 minutes of people hunting for rocks – hint, if you want to try this, bring your own rocks.

With time passing, we continued in a loop back almost to SH1 near Utiku then up into the hills to the site of the old Gravity

Rangitikei River near Whitecliffs boulders.

Canyon adventure park. Here we stopped on the side of the road for lunch before exploring a little further to get some views of the 100m drop straight down to the river.

After finding somewhere a little safer to turn, we headed out of the valley and took Pukeokahu Rd for a very interesting drive in a loop up to Pukeokahu and back across to SH1, finally stopping for a quick break at Taihape, where I took time to explore some of the local architecture. Rather than just follow SH1 back to Mangaweka, we turned off on Toe Toe Rd for run between the Rangitikei and Kawhatau Rivers before returning to our accommodation with time to freshen up before a social dinner at the Awastone campground restaurant.

Our plan for the final day was to first visit the parking area for the walk to the Whitecliffs boulders at Ohingaiti. This was a very pleasant backroad drive in its own right, with expansive views across the Rangitikei valley, but the 25min each way walk with about a 100m drop down to the river (and back up again) was not on the plans since this was a 4WD touring trip, not a tramping trip.

Another 100m deep gorge on the upper Rangitikei River.

May and I will be going back to do the walk sometime soon.

From there we worked our way generally eastward, before dropping down to the Oroua River just opposite Apiti for lunch. This was somewhere Ashley had found earlier, but with a fairly rutted access road, he had not explored it in detail. By now the effects of yet another incoming cyclone were starting to be felt, with dark clouds looming.

The emphasis now became more on finishing the trip than exploring, and we were soon on the run to London's Ford then up onto the ridge overlooking the Pohangina Valley. We followed this for a while before dropping down to the valley floor for the final run to Ashhurst and the end of the trip. I had a refreshing coffee by the river in the Ashhurst domain watching the storm clouds gather, before our final two-hour run home.

Another successful trip, but the second time in a row we had to dash home ahead of a cyclone.

NZ4WD SPORTS SECTION

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EXTREME.E
NEOM
NMX6
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EXITS AND RE-ENTRIES

MIDGLEY'S BACK, BUT MCCALL UNLOADS CLASS THREE CAR

Longtime class three ace Brendon Midgley is back in the sport and has moved up to the unlimited class one category, importing an Australian single-seater which already has some top-level Kiwi race heritage.

Aussie Brad Prout won the 2011 Taupo 1000 outright. He dominated the longest and toughest off-road race in the southern hemisphere, leading both days of the 1000 km event held in pine forests near Taupo.

Driving his purpose-built V8 Jimco single-seater race car, Prout led both days of the 2011 Asset Finance Taupo 1000 and fought off determined challenges from Kiwi racers Raana Horan and Malcolm Langley, Prout setting a new lap record for the unlimited-class cars.

Horan's massive Nissan Titan V8 truck had taken pole for the race, almost two seconds faster than Prout and 11 seconds faster than Whakatane driver, Malcolm Langley.

Now the Jimco returns to the Kiwi race scene at the hands of a very capable driver. Midgley bought the car some time ago, and has spent time getting it the way he likes.

Meanwhile, Tony McCall has sold the class three single seater he raced at the opening round of the 2023 New Zealand Offroad Racing Championship.

He said battling in class three was 'great fun' but he missed the sheer grunt of a V8 class one car.

"The racing was great, fast and clean and hard. But every time I came out of a corner, I was missing that big class one surge of torque and power," he said.

The Manukau racer says the car has gone to one of the sport's top young drivers, while he is 'busy enough' organising events at the Colin Dale stadium track.

He is strongly considering moving coming events to a Sunday.

"We ran Saturdays this year, but the sport is about families – in the cars, on the spectator stands. Saturday sport keeps families busy enough, so we're looking at going to Sunday events."

The races, including the Stadium Championship and New Zealand Offroad Grand Prix, all start at 11.00am and are finished by 2.30pm.

IT'S EXTREME!

MUD FLINGING, GRAVITY DEFYING ACTION APLENTY

See the best 4WD trials teams up close in action as the Suzuki Extreme 4x4 Challenge returns for its eighth year running.

The NZ 4X4 Trials series has finished, and the top 10 place-getters plus a couple of wildcards all qualify for this unique motorsport event at Turakina in Hawke's Bay. Suzuki is back as naming rights sponsor once more.

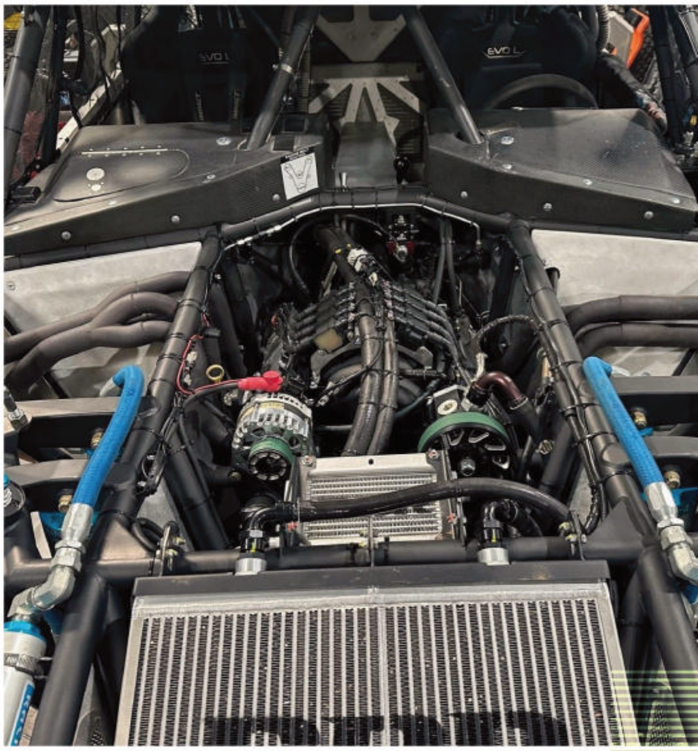
This event has been created by CowperTrucks for spectator entertainment and prime time TV viewing on TV3's *CRC Motorsport* show. Expect big crowds, Extreme 4WD action, live commentary, food and refreshments and great spectator viewing – bellowing V8s and 4 banger turbo engines; mud-flinging, gravity defying custom-built specialised 4WD hot rods and much more.

There is only one Suzuki Extreme 4X4 event; action starts at 9:00am sharp with 12 different courses in total. Watch each truck battle against the 60-second countdown clock while trying to drive through as many of the 10 gates as possible at each test

Check out the CowperTrucks Facebook page for more event info and general 4X4 builds and related news.

Image by Ashley Lucas

BRENTHEL
RACE
6173



A FRESH NEW TRUCK ANYONE?

HUGE SPECIFICATION, TOP EQUIPMENT, JUST WIN LOTTO

America is the home of off-road racing technology, and has seeded the New Zealand scene with some mighty trucks recently.

This is a Trophy Truck, at home in America's deserts. Some Kiwis reckon Trophy Trucks are too big for local tracks, though big Kiwi endurance races like the Taupo 1000 have been graced by these biggest, baddest trucks.

This one was built in September 2022 for the 2023 American season and used for the last few races of 2022. Powered by a 525ci V8, it finished off the year winning both BITD and Legacy Championships in the 6100 class.

The Brenthel truck's frame is TIG welded and 100 per cent CAD designed: chassis, arms, geometry and fixtures. The whole frame is made of 4130 chrome-moly tube.

Suspension arms are heat treated and engineered using 3D CAD to be as light and strong as possible, boxed with 4130 plate and tubing.

This one's top end, and might need a Lotto win, but that has been known to happen. Almost brand new, this one is priced at $385,000USD.

Front suspension:
- 3.0″ King coilovers B.I. proprietary valving.
- 4.5″ King Kong Bypass B.I. proprietary valving.
- 2.5″ 4130 Hollow bolt on front snout.
- 7075 Aircraft billet hubs

Rear suspension:
- 3.0″ King coilovers w/ B.I. proprietary valving.
- 4.5″ King Kong bypass w/ B.I. proprietary valving.
- Finned reservoirs.

Power steering:
- Steering box with billet adapter and 4130 swingers
- Steering column shaft 4130 shaft and sealed bearings.

Drivetrain:
- 525 cubic inch V8 engine.
- Culhane transmission .
- TriY Headers.
- 4″ Custom 4130 Housing.
- 36-spline TT axles gun drilled
- Alcon brakes.

Cooling system:
- Custom double pass radiator w/ 2-14″ electric fans.
- Custom radiator lines w/ silicone hose.
- Oil cooler.
- Dual transmission coolers.
- Power steering cooler.

Interior:
- Fire suppression system.
- Sparco Seats.
- Data logging.
- Pit speed limiter.

Body:
- Full fibreglass body.
- Carbon fibre dash .
- Aluminium skidplates.

Wheels and tires:
- 17″ Method beadlock wheels.
- 40″ BF Goodrich tyres.

GOING BIG'S THE WAY TO WIN

Meanwhile, if the Brenthel's a bit pricy, there are many cheaper US trucks and race cars becoming available these days. Prolite, Pro2, Pro4 and more – the US scene is chock full of hot machinery built to a range of specifications and budgets.

In recent years, Kiwi racers have plonked down upwards of $150,000 for late model used US vehicles; top-end Kiwi builds inspired by US tech can run to $220,000 or more. The latest to hit the dirt locally is a mighty build by Keri Louie, a four-wheel drive unlimited class 'home grown' truck wearing Chev body panels.

861
vertex
lubricants
Oils // Grease // Coolant // Chemicals
4WDbits
Cooper TIRES
841
MAD MAY Racing

Images by Phil Hagan

SENSATIONAL STADIUM ACTION

OFF-ROAD RACING'S NEW BEST TRACK TURNS IT ON

Having skirted the looming devastation of Cyclone Gabrielle to complete the opening round of the 2023 championship, Counties Manukau club pushed the 2023 Mickey Thompson New Zealand Stadium Offroad Championship back a few weeks to be sure of decent weather. It worked a treat.

The second televised stadium-racing meet of the year went ahead under summery skies; mid-week rain and judicious use of the water truck kept dust to a minimum.

The one-day event attracted a slightly bigger field than the pre-cyclone national round at the same venue, and once more the 'side by side' U-class UTVs were the biggest grids, with 12 Polaris, Yamaha Can Am and Honda cars.

Next most popular was the unlimited truck class, with eight entries including Nick Hall and Nick Leahy in ProLites, Hall's an American truck and Leahy's locally built. The usually-quick Leigh Bishop was a non-starter on the day, and Gary Baker's Pro4 truck was out, still awaiting a set of exhaust rockers from the US. Likewise Paul Hackett's mighty American truck mas missing in action after its big crash at the nationals.

The truck races turned into a 'Nick vs Nick' affair, Nick Hall once more winning the class after Nick Leahy tipped his truck – gently – in an early heat.

Ricky May was second, also running an American Prolite design, and Bruce McKeown was third.

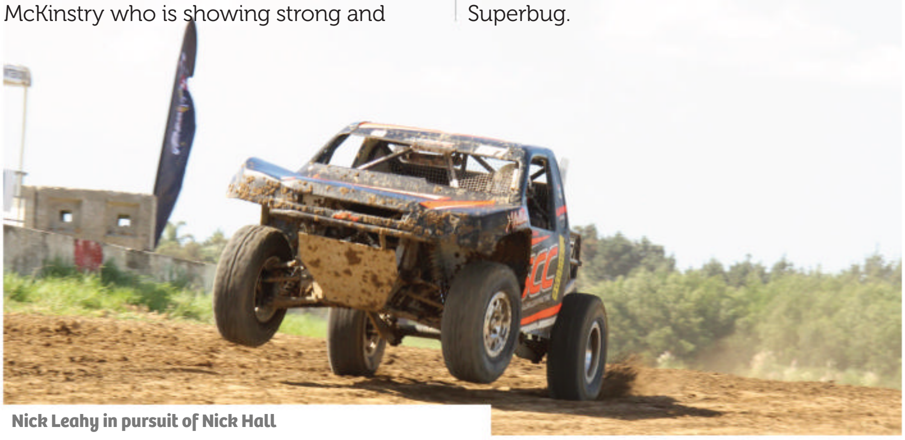
Boston Morgan-Horan put on a top show in Raana Horan's mighty 4WD Nissan Titan V8.

Matthew Bishop was doing double duty, racing his Honda Talon in the UTVs and his fast but fragile Challenger VW. He was second in the Challenger class and brought the Honda home third in the Ultra4 UTVs.

Challenger was won outright by Emma McKinstry who is showing strong and consistent speed in the little single seaters.

Experienced racer Steve Hughes had one of the more serious crashes of the day. He approached the small jump beside the dummy grid gate from the outside of the track, but when he tried to line his car up for the jump it instead flicked sideways, sending him over the jump and into an end for end roll. The car landed back on its wheels with damaged suspension. Hughes was dazed but not hurt.

Carl Ruiterman made easy work of the UTV turbo class; Holly Russell won the Lite Buggy class, Lachlan McWatt and Asher Morgan with the Kiwitruck youth categories and Aaron Crabb won Superbug.



Nick Leahy in pursuit of Nick Hall

RESULTS

HydroVac KiwiTruck youth category
1st: J31 Lachlan McWatt
2nd: J11 Jack Rice
3rd: J26 Zac Rowberry

HydroVac Modified youth category
1st: M54 Asher Morgan
2nd: M71 Levi Kennedy
3rd: M29 Vincent Joy

Lucas Oil SuperBug (VW 1200)
1st: Aaron Crabbe

Lucas Oil LiteBuggy (1.3-litre)
1st: 551 Holly Russell
2nd: 518 Geoff Matich
3rd: 574 Aaron Hogg-Medlock

CT Civil Challenger VW
1st: C14 Emma McKinstry
2nd: C63 Matthew Bishop
3rd: C01 Dave Maggs

Polaris Ultra4Turbo UTV
1st: S22 Carl Ruiterman
2nd: S40 Steven Stokes
3rd: S75 Aaron Rogers

ARB Ultra4 UTV
1st: U31 Shane McWatt
2nd: U18 Cam Paton
3rd: U63 Matthew Bishop

ARB Ultra2
1st: 1082 Ed Hiestand

ENZED ProBuggy
1st: 333 Brendon Old
2nd: 393 Mark Goldstone
3rd: 377 Mike Gibson

Cooper Tires ProLite
1st: 861 Nick Hall
2nd: 841 Ricky May
3rd: 843 Bruce McKeown

Federal Tyres Pro 1
1st: 196 Justin Davies
2nd: 169 Paul Eayrs

Carl Reuterman

Asher Morgan

Holly Russell

Holly Russell in action.

Brendon Old

Bruce McKeown

Matthew Bishop

Carl Reuterman

GILMOUR GOES FASTER

KIWI DRIVER HAS A BUSY RACE YEAR

Dunedin racer Emma Gilmour is once more in the thick of offroad racing, sharing her McLaren all-electric 4WD with American Tanner Foust in the global Extreme E series.

As the championship's ten teams got behind the wheel at the Season 3 opener, the McLaren Extreme E team looked to pick up where they left off with a podium finish at the Season 2 finale in Uruguay

The 3.4-kilometre course of the 2023 Desert X Prix in Neom, Saudi Arabia, provided the first of many challenges in what promises to be the most tightly fought season to-date.

A hectic Qualifying 1 on Saturday saw Emma Gilmour and Tanner Foust experience a frustrating start to their Season 3 campaign. Running in P3 in Qualifying 1, the driver pairing ultimately finished fifth in the first session, suffering a Switch Zone penalty as they adjusted to the course.

Bouncing back with a stronger performance in Qualifying, the Neom McLaren Extreme E Team finished their heat in third place. It was not enough to escape the Redemption Race, however, as the team finished sixth in the overall Qualifying standings – one spot short of a place in the Grand Final.

Having won the Crazy Race in spectacular fashion at last year's Desert X Prix, Foust and Gilmour were no strangers to battling it out against the best of the rest in Neom, Saudi Arabia.

Foust enjoyed a great start to the series' first ever Redemption Race, but the race was stoppedwhen Nasser Al-Attiyah's rolled his ABT Cupra XE car over the top of Foust's Odyssey 21.

In the chaos Heikki Kovalainen had taken the lead for JBXE, but as the race resumed Gilmour used her hyperdrive to close the gap on Hedda Hösas and overtake the JBXE driver as Neom McLaren Extreme E Team won the Redemption Race and secured valuable championship points.

"We certainly didn't disappoint on the 'extreme' side. We started off with some pretty aggressive set-up changes due to the lack of track time we have in this series. We unfortunately lost a bit of time in the process in Qualifying 1, but then showed good pace for the rest of the day. The team were fantastic, repairing the car, enabling us to improve, and we won the Redemption Race making us the best of the rest."

GRIDPLAY.VOTE
NEOM
NM XE
Continental
Pixel
vantage

Gilmour said Saturday was a tough start to the first Extreme E event of the season.

"We'd been refining our set-up from Friday and didn't have the pace in Qualifying 1. We had an incident in the Switch Zone, which also set us back. However, from that point we clawed our way back and kept fighting. The team did an amazing job, working tirelessly as the car has quite a few battle scars from the races."

Round 2 offered a chance to use the momentum from that race win for a better Qualifying stint, with plenty of racing and points opportunities still on the table in Neom.

Sunday was another challenging day for the McLaren Extreme E Team, with fourth and third place finishes in their respective Qualifying Heats meaning the team narrowly missed out on Round 2's Grand Final.

Running in second and fighting for points once again in the Redemption Race, Foust and Gilmour nearly gained an all-important 2 championship points from the Continental Traction Challenge as they pushed hard for another Redemption Race win.

Closing out their weekend with second place in Round 2's Redemption Race saw the NEOM McLaren Extreme E Team come away from Saudi Arabia having accrued a total of 14 points and in 7th place in the championship standings.

Emma Gilmour added: "It was a slightly frustrating day and it's a shame that we have not come away from this Desert X Prix with more points. In motorsport though, you can always have worse weekends. Considering where we were at the start of the weekend, and the progress we had to make, I think we did well."

Tanner Foust said: "We chased some set-up gremlins for at least the first two days which cost us some time, but by the end the car had great pace. In the Traction Challenge, which is a long sector, we were 0.08 seconds away from winning on Sunday. We didn't make the Grand Final in either round, so we had to battle it out in the Redemption Race. We won that in Round 1, and came second in Round 2, and we're more motivated than ever to push on with our new set-up in Scotland."

The Neom McLaren Extreme E Team will be looking to hit the ground running at the next Extreme E round in Scotland on 13-14 May.

Meanwhile, Gilmour has also unveiled her new Citroen R5 rally car for her New Zealand championship campaign. The change to a 'factory' R5 car is expected to deliver greater reliability than the locally built AP4 car she has run in the past.

WORTH THE WAIT

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

Image by Kaye Herbert

The penultimate round of the Lucas Oil NZ 4X4 Trials Series on 8 March took competitors to Colyton in the Manawatu.

The Manawatu 4WD Club hosted the penultimate round of the season sponsored by Combi Clamp, just north of Colyton in Pohangina. The proceeds from the day went towards the Grassroots Trust Rescue Helicopter based in Palmerston North. The course was spread across two valleys with spectators in a prime location to see all the action from a ridgeline between them.

After 10 years of trying, Neal Turner and Wade Alexander took their first win in the series. They finished the day almost 100 points clear of second place finishers Sam Thomsen and Mitchell Caldow.

Turner/Alexander started well, finishing second in the morning behind Thomsen/Caldow. They overcame a two-point deficit and had a 99-point advantage by the end of the day. Sam Thomsen and Mitchell Caldow were runners up, outscoring rivals Neville Mather and Richard Verner who had disastrous start to their day with their Nitro Custom going into limp mode on the first course. They finished the morning eighth and ended the day third.

Brinn Fogden and Sean Bydeley survived the day to win A Class, suffering another rear driveshaft failure with three to go in the afternoon, eventually replacing it and finishing the day.

Shayne Towers and Tony Hadland took their first C Class win of the season and finished eighth overall on the day. Third overall in the morning, the crew finished in the top 10.

Behind the top three were Andy Canning and John Boylett.

The pair continue to push their LS7 powered Howat buggy to its limits and aren't afraid to carve their own line.

Dan Cowper and Luke Donald followed up their third placing at the Bay of Plenty round with fifth overall.

Cody Fogden and Karl Burgener were on the heels of the more capable K-Class trucks in the morning before a clunky rear diff late in the afternoon slowed them.

In K Class Andrew and Janet Graham continue to drive in a league of their own, winning by just over 400 points.

John Sheridan and Mike Rolls narrowly beat Willow Eayrs and Garry Ledbury by 21 points at the end of the day. Eayrs/Ledbury were trailing 75 points in the morning, only recovering by 54 in the afternoon.

Spreading the word

Over the years, we have worked hard to 'sell' off-road racing to prospective drivers and to motorsport enthusiasts.

It was never formal, or a role recognised by ORANZ, but over the last few decades we have done ambassador work at speed shows, A&P Shows, the Race to the Sky, the Taupo 1000, the Ashley Forest hillclimb and more.

Another staunch supporter of the sport, Dan Fisher, has his mighty Razorback class one car for sale. He's leaving the sport to do other stuff, which has been an on-again, off-again situation for a while.

Having sold his Pro4 to Gary Baker, Joel Giddy seems to be downsizing the Giddy clan's involvement as well.

Our rumoured third loss is Paul Hackett. He crashed his Toyota V8 powered American truck earlier this year at Colin Dale Park and has put it up for sale.

These departures hurt. Each has been a red-hot supporter of off-road racing and their absence is a real blow. All of them have been real crowd-pleasers on the track and a real buzz to banter with in the paddock between races.

These characters, and others like them, are what make off-road racing so exciting.

In the meantime, the side-by-side categories (UTVs) are surging ahead. Though S class is yet to really fire up, the U class grids at the opening round of the championship were huge.

Four-wheel drive, twice the suspension travel of a Challenger, and off-the-shelf competition parts – what's not to like? All wrapped in a modern frame and roll cage for strength and safety.

Now, I'm a truck racer through and through, have been since I built my first Holden ute.

But if UTVs had been around last century? I think I could have been tempted.

Sure, when you get to the upper levels like Carl Ruiterman, the vehicles cost a fair bit, but step into the pack chasing Carl and UTV racers get competition like no other class these days. Going wheel to wheel with 17 or so other racers on a farm course or in the forest is mighty appealing.

TRD
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DAN FISHER
FISHER RACING
1

Nobody wants to be a class champion racing against one or two others. Do they?

In other news: web nasties are hitting the sport these days.

From the fairly lame redirects claiming to link to live coverage of events to last month's hijack of the Otago club's Facebook page, these morons are out there. We all need to be wary of the ongoing online threat.

If an event has live coverage, it will be advertised well before the event by the event organisers.

If some random asks to be friended onto a page, think twice about allowing them.

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Photo taken by Mark Baker

GEOFFZONE BY GEOFF ANDERS

Aussie originals

I'm reading an Ozzie book about drovers, cattlemen, horse traders, Aborigines, deserts, animals, heat and cross-country transport. An autobiography beginning one hundred years ago.

Cattle stations, farms, ranches, whatever you wish to call them were big. Make that massive. Here in NZ we hear of early stations (farms) of tens of thousands of acres, those in the Northern Territory (NT), and adjacent states were thousands of square miles (much bigger than acres or kilometres).

Mostly desert, travel was tough and still is. Just as our freezing Otago storms over barren hills killed many a prospector, the scorching barren deserts put many travellers to a slow gruesome death, eaten by birds, animals and insects. Freezing to death is said to be a nicer way to go...

I'm not keen on deserts, unless it's on TV with the fascinating David Attenborough, though I do love to drive a good dune if available.

Drovers of the book had quite a mission. Their only transport was foot, horse or camel. They drove – no wheels involved here - mobs of thousands of cattle cross-country for many hundreds of miles to another station, town or railhead. It took months. They rode horses mainly, with a trail of heavily laden packhorses and walking helpers, sometimes whole Aboriginal families. 300 miles at 'beefspeed'!

Their main horses were carefully trained and selected from herds of hundreds. No straight-off-the-showroom-floor purchases here. Saddle up, walk them through yards, trees and obstacles, try them at half throttle then full gallop. Check the brakes and jumps. Never walk close behind, watch those big teeth. Be sure to fit the hobbles at camp.

Some were chosen for comfort or speed or low fuel consumption, some for manoeuvrability, brains and predictability. Packhorses for temperament and strength. Not much help if a horse bolts into a distant dust cloud when carrying a month's food supply and the ammo!

Heading for a mustering camp 30 to 150kms away there'd be three mounts for each rider – a full day on, two off, but they still had to walk the whole distance. Imagine having to take and fuel three 4WDS for every driver for a 300k round trip!

They carried full sets of shoeing and horse-breaking equipment for a mob of horses as they selected, lost or gained some while away. Stations would have many-square-mile paddocks holding hundreds of breeding horses to select from. Most skilled riders could break in new wild mounts. A professional breaker earned good money.

Stores carried included large tarps for shelters and also to wrap the stores in to swim across the rivers in the wet season. Bridges? Rare as radiator caps mate! One guy turned up on a bicycle, reckoned it beat owning a horse. Didn't need water or grass, never tried to wander off or chase another bike 'cos it was on heat, didn't kick, buck or bite (or so he thought). Didn't last long.

The book's author spent years doing the cattle thing then got into buffalo hunting as far north as Australia goes. This entailed chasing them on horses trained to get up alongside their haunches at full gallop, through trees, bush and overhanging branches, reign in one hand, loaded single-shot rifle in the other to shoot point-blank into the beasts spine to disable it, then escape the lethal reach of its horns as it crashed.

What a way to earn a living, all in the hot and dry or hot and stuffy and wet NT! No radios, phones or internet. Send a message? Write it with pen and ink or pencil, ride it a hundred miles to the nearest post office. Wait.

It wasn't all bad. There was great camaraderie between workers and landholders and plenty of time off. Travel was usually from homestead to homestead or town via 'bores' or waterholes anywhere from 30 to 150k's apart and often dried up. You'd get a feed and bed at any station and could often trade horses or supplies enroute. Travellers needed packhorses with plenty of supplies.

Next time you're stuffing the 12V fridge with trip tucker and polishing the windows and mirrors think of those historical travellers in deserts, rainforests, alps, blizzards, with no shelter, many days walk from primitive civilisation, and often with no clear idea of exactly where they were or which way to go! Explorers like Julius von Haast, Arthur Dudley Dobson, Thomas Cass and the Maori adventurers before them that often had shown those guys which way to go when discovering NZ's secrets.

As we turn the key, fire up the GPS and PRS, load the family, open a window, listen to the news and drive happily off into our

VAHRYOUS THOUGHTS BY PETER VAHRY

Sustainable 4WD use

As a recreation with a recent past of almost explosive growth of participants, there has not been the equivalent increase in places to indulge our recreation. Maybe we've 'arrived' at the wrong time, a time when the 'environment' is the prime concern of many in our community?

A key word in the environment conversation is sustainability, and again that's perhaps an area that our recreation has been slow to understand. Which makes it easy for others to find examples of places used by four-wheelers that certainly could not be considered to be sustainable.

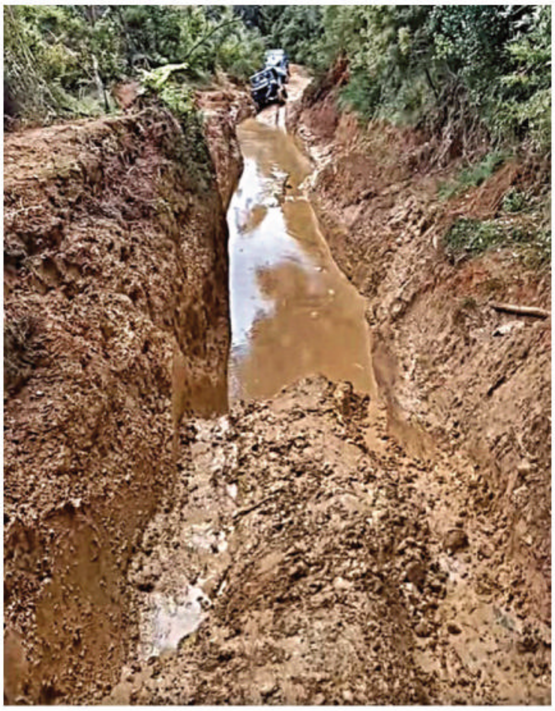
Frankly we really can't put up an argument against the closure of a 4WD track in such situations and the chances of getting an alternative route, become rather miniscule. While we do have some supporters in local councils and government departments, they are greatly outnumbered by those who would prefer that we all took up cycling or walking.

There is absolutely no doubt that we are viewed as 'eco-terrorists' by some other outdoor recreations because of the damage that can result from unmanaged and indiscriminate use of motor vehicles on a soil surface.

That is not to say that many other forms of outdoor recreation don't also do damage. Trail bike and mountain bike trails often become deep trenches, as can walking tracks, but ours are somewhat wider.

One of our problems is that we are also competing with those other recreations for the use of land when perhaps we should be encouraging a more collaborative approach. After all, when we actually do maintenance, we can usually drive to a location with assorted tools, while to maintain a walking or cycle track can involve considerably more effort. We know that those other users often enjoy a 4WD route because it is wider and it is possible to walk side by side rather than watching where you are placing your feet, looking at someone's back and ducking overhead branches.... well certainly on many North Island tracks!

We should probably try to engage better with other recreations using similar routes on public land such as unformed legal roads and places managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC) to avoid 'turf battles'. There are quite a few situations where a legal road has been 'taken over' by a recreation, despite that road still being legally a public road. Four-wheeling is not blameless in that respect.



We must try to ensure that our four-wheeling options are not nibbled away by closures due to poor sustainability practices, risks to endangered species, archeological sites etc. We know that north of Taupō we are faced with 'management' of Kauri Die-back, which can be a reason for banning access to numerous areas of public land.

Our access to beaches is steadily being constrained, mostly on the basis of ongoing poor driving behaviour and a lack of recognition of the rules that many Councils have in place to protect dunes. In late February the Marlborough coast was closed to vehicle use on the basis of protection of the coastal environment.

In another forum, I was recently taken to task by a 4WD club over a statement I made in a publication about the risk of the wider public becoming aware of the disastrous environmental condition of a popular 4WD route. They seemed to think that I was actually alerting the public to the issue. That was not my intention, however I do know that the local Council and various land managers along that route have great concerns about the state of what is a legal road. In reality there can only be one outcome in that instance and that's a closure of that road. Another that will be lost to our recreation and whose users will find another place to eventually destroy.

Somehow, we need to find ways to also engage with those four-wheelers, who are a majority not engaged with formal four-wheel drive clubs. There are some excellent people out there with skills that could make a difference to track maintenance and our relationships with the wider community.

Overall, very little is known about four-wheel drive recreation in New Zealand. We don't know participation numbers, nor do we have any data about the number of users of various venues. We need to get those statistics, because without them we look disorganised and just guessing when we lobby for access. Why are there so many mountain bike trails? It's because their lobbyists can provide statistics.

It's an election year and politicians will be looking for support, but even if one promised us the earth for our votes, we could not even guess how many people have an interest in four-wheeling. Perhaps it is time to start getting some statistics around our recreation and stop guessing

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TORQUETALK BY ASHLEY LUCAS

Pioi Station

Last month I got the opportunity to check out Pioi Station (now referred to as Awakino Estate by current owner) that runs north along the coast at Awakino. The Land Rover Owners Club (Rotorua) was asked to provide transport around the 4,000 hectare station by residents of the Highfield retirement village and we agreed.

One of the residents, Norton Telfer, originally farmed the station from the 1960s for 30 plus years and he and his friends from the village were having a day out looking over this coastal paradise property.

Members and vehicles met at Awakino village in the morning only to find that the residents were delayed due to the ladies leaving first in the car with morning tea – and the van keys. A delay of 40 minutes to rectify. We met in the woolshed of a neighbouring property for morning tea then the 18 or so residents piled into our vehicles and we headed a few hundred metres to Pioi Station.

Entrance to the station is a tunnel near the banks of the Awakino River just before it goes into the sea. The property is now owned by a German, Karl Reipen, who made his money in canned coffee. The place now has a large indoor horse arena and is used to breed and train horses in dressage. As well as the indoor equestrian centre, it has 26 stables, a vineyard and a number of homes, which in the past have been used as accommodation.

Past the arena and it was a steep hill climb, so steep I chose to select low range, up the driveway to the top where we stopped for views over the coast and could see where the Awakino River flowed into the sea. Norton Telfer gave the gathered group a run down on the place and his life on the Station. It was very interesting listening to these older guys talking about the early days and struggles of farming bush clad hills. We continued on down close to the shoreline then up again, passing a house which would have been over three kilometres from the entrance. From there we came to the woolshed which had definitely seen better days due to lack of maintenance and the story goes that shearers refused to shear in there, so it had been left derelict. We were told the shed had been rebuilt in 1945 after the original shed was damaged by a Japanese mine that came ashore onto the rocks one night. Those in the nearby house heard the noise, came out but couldn't see anything in the dark and it was only the next day they saw the woolshed riddled with holes.

Just past the woolshed we encountered a group of horses and riders and pulled off the track onto what was the original house site when Norton lived there. The house is no longer, after a fire which destroyed the homestead. At the time of the fire there was a helicopter there so he used the monsoon bucket to drop sea water on the house. Turns out you can't fight a house fire from the air as the water just cascaded off the roof and not into the fire.

The property is a long narrow block that follows the coast so is affected by the sea breezes and while the wind was a typical cool onshore wind off the Tasman Sea it wasn't too bad. We soon came past an area that had obviously been logged in the last few years and Norton told us that when they wanted to harvest the trees they knew they would never get the logging trucks through the tunnel, so the answer was to buy the neighbouring back block and put a road in, out to Manganui (Marakopa/Awakino Road).

Out onto the Manganui Road, we headed north briefly before turning into Mount Duthie Station where lunch was to be in the woolshed. Unfortunately, the ladies had gone for their own drive in the car and were stuck and needed assistance. Lack of phone coverage meant we didn't know until we got to the station. A couple of members headed off to the rescue while the rest of us chatted, looked around the old sheds and equipment. Eventually the rescuers returned with the ladies and lunch of sandwiches, bacon and egg pie along with cup of tea and various sweet slices, which was worth the wait.

After our late lunch we drove up through Mount Duthie Station climbing up through farmland and the odd bush block. There was a pond area with swans and ducks enjoying the peace until we drove past and also a hut set back further up with sign "The Stag Inn" obviously a place to retire to for hunting in the various bush blocks. At the top we must have got close to where we were earlier in the day as we stopped on the cliff top to take in the views again.

Due to the late hour and the fact that our hosts were missing out on Happy Hour back home, we returned back down through Mount Duthie, taking a slightly shorter but steeper and slippery track down. Care was needed on this one to avoid going into the bank. Lyndon was the only one who did, with clay on the door handle telling the tale.

It was a great day out sightseeing, yet doing a little something for the community. Talk is maybe it will be done again as we retired to the Awakino Hotel for a belated Happy Hour before dinner.

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